

Alabama Retailer

*SHOP ALABAMA
Holiday Spending
to Draw Closer
to \$15 Billion*

*MEMBER HIGHLIGHT
ALEX GATEWOOD
Founder of
The Locker Room,
Tuscaloosa*

*RETRO RETURN
ARC Returns
\$8.1M to Members;
Largest Return Ever*

CREATING MAGIC
Ginger Milligan
OWNER OF FANTASY ISLAND TOYS

*RETAILERS
OF THE YEAR
Alabama Retail
Honors Eleven
for 2020-2021*



From the President



**The Longer You Stick
with Alabama Retail Comp
the Better Your Return**

I like sharing great news.

Especially when I have millions of reasons to do so.

The Alabama Retail Comp board of trustees has voted to return a record \$8.1 million to the 2022 participants in our self-insured workers' compensation fund, Alabama Retail Comp. Most Alabama Retail Association members are also ARC participants. See Page 15 for more details.

A retrospective return is given as a credit when you renew your policy.

The Alabama Retail Association formed ARC in 1984 to provide its members with cost effective workers' compensation coverage. Essentially, ARC is a nonprofit trust that returns all profits to its participants.

The retrospective return formula is loss sensitive at the customer level and is designed to reward employers with safe workplaces. As excess funds become available from previous years, the board distributes that money to participants. Numerous years are involved. The key to maximizing your retrospective return is to have low losses and to stay with ARC. The lower your losses and the more time you spend with ARC, the higher your retrospective return will be. That is good news!

I also recently had the pleasure of delivering good news to the 2021 Retailers of the Year (See Pages 6 and 7). I enjoyed traveling the state and spending time with each of the winners. It is an amazing experience to see the passion, creativity and can-do spirit of these retailers. Be sure to check out these outstanding retailers and restaurants as you travel through Alabama.

Rick Brown, Publisher and President

Alabama Retailer

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Publisher
Rick Brown

Editor
Nancy King Dennis

Design
Copperwing Design

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Brandon Robbins

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Holiday Spending to Near \$15 billion in Alabama

Holiday sales in Alabama could grow by double digits for the second year in a row.

Alabamians spent 11.6% more during November and December 2020 than they did during the same period in 2019, which was the highest holiday growth rate on record for our state.

So far in 2021, taxed sales in Alabama have grown almost 20% over 2020.

For the three most recent months with numbers available, sales growth has been about 11.7%.

As much as an 11% growth in 2021 holiday sales in Alabama over the traditional holiday spending months of 2020 could clearly happen, even though national economists predict holiday sales will grow about 7% this year.

Seven percent growth would place taxed spending in Alabama in the last two months of the year at \$14.796 billion, while 11% growth would put that total at \$14.802 billion.



Either way, record spending in Alabama for the holidays is a given.

As they did last year, Alabamians began their holiday shopping in October to ensure they could get the gifts they wanted and have them arrive on time. Because of the pandemic, manufacturing and delivery of goods continue to take longer than is optimal.

Alabama consumers, like the rest of the nation, will shop more in store this year than last, and they are expected to spend more on travel and entertainment this holiday season than last year.

Alabama Retail will advocate that shoppers #KeepTheCheerHere by buying from retailers based or operating in Alabama as part of its Shop Alabama for the Holidays campaign. ■

TIDE-CENTRIC

‘Tuscaloosa Has Been Good to Us,’ Says Alex Gatewood, Owner and Founder

FOR 57 YEARS, THE LOCKER ROOM HAS BEEN SELLING TRADITIONAL MENSWEAR AND GAME DAY CLOTHING NEAR THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA CAMPUS

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photos by Brandon Robbins.



Vice President Rush Crawford, left, is one of many team members at The Locker Room, who first came to work there when he was a University of Alabama student. Alex Gatewood, right, who opened the store in 1964, continues to work there and train the next generation six days a week.

Alex Gatewood initially came to Tuscaloosa to go to graduate school at The University of Alabama. Instead, he put his marketing and retailing undergraduate degree from Mississippi State University to work immediately.

He entered a management training program for Pizitz, one of Alabama's leading retail department stores at the time.

After a year and a half, that experience convinced Alex he had what it took to operate his own retail business.

On Nov. 1, 1964, he and a partner opened a 750-square-foot store at 1402 University Blvd. on The Strip in Tuscaloosa called The Locker Room. At the time, Alex was 23 years old.

Fifty-seven years later, at age 80, Alex is still at it, six days a week.

"I do still enjoy it," he said.

In 1966, Alex moved The Locker Room two blocks away to a failed competitor's spot at 1218 University Blvd. On Thanksgiving weekend 2015, the store moved to its current location at 2104 University Blvd., where University Boulevard intersects with 21st Street.

"Tuscaloosa is a great town. It has been good to us," Alex said.

Alex remains at the helm as president of the business he founded more than a half century ago. The other owners include Rush Crawford, who also serves as vice president; Alex's son, Mark, who is in sales for an outdoor media company and also helps some with sales at the store; and Tracy Gatewood, Alex's daughter who is a retail real estate broker.

"Growing up around the rhythm of retail helps me communicate with owners. I understand business challenges," said Tracy. When asked about her father's influence on her career choice, she added, "There is a kinship in the retail industry, and my family and I have a sincere desire for all to be successful."

Selling and retail run deep in the Gatewood family. Alex also notes that his salesmanship first developed at age 6, while working for his father at his Mississippi grocery store and gas station. It was his dad that co-signed for the \$5,000 loan that made it possible for Alex to open the traditional menswear and game day clothing store in Tuscaloosa.

Alabama Football

The University of Alabama's athletic programs play a key role in the success of The Locker Room. "The football

season is more important for us than the holiday season," said Alex, who at the time of this interview was looking forward to the Crimson Tide's seven 2021 season home games, especially the four in a row preceding the big away game against Auburn on Thanksgiving weekend.

The Locker Room started the private label mascot trend with its original Elephantwear collection. Its trademarked green-eyed elephant symbol can be found on knit shirts, button-downs, pullovers, jackets, pants, belts and assorted giftware.



The Locker Room at 2104 University Blvd. in Tuscaloosa is open 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays. Visit online at locker-room.biz

Its University of Alabama premium apparel and giftware sales fluctuate based on how UA ranks. National championship years give sales the biggest boost. So far in its history, The Locker Room has benefited from 12 University of Alabama championships.

The University of Alabama also provides Alex with much of his workforce. Half of his current staff are UA students. Rush, the

store's vice president, began working there in 2003 as a freshman in college.

"We are lucky to be where we are," said Rush, who ended up staying on after graduation, rather than taking a job in the brick industry. "Nick Saban and I started our full-time tenure the same week, and business has grown vastly since."

In 2006, Rush added an ecommerce component to The Locker Room's website, which first appeared in 2001. "We've seen exponential growth with the national recognition Saban brought to the University of Alabama's football program," Rush said. Under Saban's coaching, the Tide has won six national championships.

As the season shifts from football into holiday, The Locker Room's wide range of menswear styles and brands and free wrapping make gift giving easy.

Alex advises his loyal customers to order sooner, rather than later, this year. "Order early or you don't get it this year," he said, referencing lingering supply chain and shipping issues related to the pandemic.

'Service is What We Do'

While its customers include nearby college students, the Locker Room's customer base spans generations.

"We serve three generations, from 18 to 80," Alex said.

"Service is what we do," the store's founder said. "If a kid comes here at 3 o'clock and needs a suit tonight, we'll have it ready for him." ■

And the 2021 Alabama Retailers of the Year are ...

Photos by Nancy Dennis, Brandon Robbins, Dawn Finch, Denise Curtis and Marlee Bailey

1 DAVID and JEFF BARRANCO

Chappy's Deli
3 Montgomery locations,
1 each in Prattville and Auburn
Gold, Annual Sales More Than \$5 Million

2 MELISSA M. CROSS

McAleer's Office Furniture, Mobile
Silver, Annual Sales More Than \$5 Million
(Pictured with her team)

3 RALPH and REBECCA SORRELL

Ritch's Pharmacy, Mountain Brook
Bronze, Annual Sales More Than \$5 Million

**4 SHERRY HARTLEY
and BETH STAULA**

Alabama Goods
Homewood and Huntsville
Gold, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million

**5 PATRICK, WILL and
TYLER YOUNGHOUSE**

Papa Dubi's Cajun Kitchen, Albertville
Silver, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million

6 STEVE ASCIK

Eastern Shore Ace Hardware, Spanish Fort
Silver, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million
(Pictured with his wife and co-owner Alisa Ascik)

7 APRIL MCCLUNG

Emily's Heirloom Pound Cakes, Homewood
Gold, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

8 ADENA GREEN

Hope's Chest Boutique & Gifts, Clanton
Silver, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

9 DEWEY and ANNETTE TODD


Todd Farms, Headland
Bronze, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million
(Pictured with Dewey's father, Joe Todd)

**10 ASHLEY MORROW, JOSEPH "SKIP"
NICHOLS and JOSH KELLEY**

The Shoppes at Coldwater, Tuscumbia
GEE Emerging Retailer of the Year

11 SOUTHERN GYP BOUTIQUE

Crystal Peavy, owner
Customers' Choice Award
1,295 votes of 10,413 votes cast
(From left Swayze Phelan, Crystal Peavy and Mary Emma Brooks)

 *Find stories about these outstanding Alabama retailers at alabamaretail.org/news/2021-retailers-year/*



More photos at [f AlabamaRetail](#)

FEATURED MEMBER

Creating Magic

By Nancy King Dennis

AN INTERVIEW WITH
Ginger Milligan,
Owner of Fantasy Island Toys

Photos By Brandon Robbins

Ginger Milligan and her team at Fantasy Island Toys love helping customers choose just the right toy and making sure they have "a totally great experience."

My mother always had some form of a business in downtown Fairhope while I was growing up,” said Ginger Milligan, who joined the family business in 1986 and has been at the helm since 2008.

Ginger’s mother, the late Jeane Duke Byrd, started by selling wooden decoupage boxes and decoupage supplies in a Fairhope storefront named Jeane’s.

Then a salesman came through and convinced her to add wooden doll houses to her offerings. She “started out with wooden doll houses and all this fun collectible little furniture,” her daughter recalls. “People would come from a very wide area to buy these houses, and they would add wallpaper and curtains and lighting. It was a huge industry.”

The salesman then persuaded Jeane to add large-scale model trains manufactured in Germany by LGB. “The same salesman waited about six months and sold her first doll line. And that’s all it took. After that, my mom was just totally into it and loved the toy industry,” said Ginger.

The toy store operated under the name Jeane’s before being renamed Fantasy Island Toys after a popular TV show in the late 1970s, a show that has been reinvented this year.

“She just wanted someplace magical for children,” said Ginger, who continues to honor her mother’s vision. “Our philosophy has always been to provide the absolute best toys for children in a safe, fun environment.”

“I like providing a fun, relaxing environment for people to pick out quality toys for their children. When I go shopping, I like it when the store owner talks to me about what I’m buying.”

- GINGER

Ginger Milligan is the owner of Fantasy Island Toys in Fairhope, one of the South’s favorite neighborhood toy stores. She and her staff hand select each toy to provide the best quality of play.

Making the Magic Happen

In the toy world, no time is more magical than Christmas, which means Ginger and her Fantasy Island Toys team stay busy in the final quarter of the year. “Christmas is such a child-related holiday,” toy stores in general don’t experience market dips during that time of year, she said.

Right after Labor Day this year, Ginger said she began encouraging customers if they saw something that they wanted for their child or grandchild for Christmas to go ahead and buy it or put it on layaway. The store began to get holiday shipments in August in anticipation that certain items

Continued on page 10

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded
1975ish

Number of Employees:
8, plus 2 seasonal

Mentors
My mom, Jeane Byrd, and my sister, Kathie. I loved working with them all those years. They set high standards for our family business that I honor every day.

Smart Move
Remaining in our same location all these years. “Quirky old” buildings can be frustrating to work in, but customers appreciate familiarity. We love being in downtown Fairhope surrounded by original buildings.

Learning Moment
Our accountant dropped by for a visit one day and commented, “inventory in your warehouse does not sell. You have too much.” Investing in a “real open to buy” program has been a game changer. (Buying inventory that sells at the right time instead of just making our store look great.)

Wisdom Shared
Slow and steady wins in the end. Provide reasons for customers to return. Kind customer service, quality products and a fun, friendly environment win.

See more
of this story at
alabamaretail.org



might be delayed or not arrive at all due to lingering supply chain issues related to the pandemic. "That's the only way to guarantee I'm going to have enough product to get through to Christmas is to go ahead and take it early," she said.

National Neighborhood Toy Store Day, which this year is Saturday, Nov. 13, starts the prime toy-buying season. That is quickly followed by the city of Fairhope's two-day holiday kickoff, which begins at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 20th, with the movie "Polar Express" playing on Fairhope Avenue in the event known as "Movie in the Street."

Downtown Fairhope's Christmas Open House begins at 1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 21, the weekend before the main event.

"Thanksgiving weekend is the biggest weekend for us of any weekend all year long," Ginger said, adding "68% of our total income for the year is made in October, November and December."

Coming off double-digit sales growth last holiday season and even into the spring and summer of this year, "we're going to have the strongest fourth quarter that we have ever experienced," she predicts.

"We don't even take a day off the entire month of December," Ginger said of her team, which grows from six to eight each year in the final month of the year, "Nobody's off. It's seven days a week from Thanksgiving weekend, all the way through Christmas Eve.

"All we can do is focus on getting the toys out of the boxes in the warehouse, getting them out front and then making sure every customer who comes in gets exactly what they had in mind," said Ginger, whose store draws customers from the entire Eastern Shore area. Fantasy Island Toys also "wraps, tags and ships" all over the United States, she said. Her customer base is 75% local and 25% "extras," which includes tourists and online shoppers.

From Nurse to Choosing Toys for A Group of Stores

"My sister started working at Fantasy Island Toys before I did," Ginger said. Kathie Byrd was in the banking industry but came to work for her mother in the late 1970s. Kathie took over all the bookkeeping duties, Ginger said.

Ginger began her work life as a nurse, still her mother and sister got her into the toy store even in that capacity. "They asked me if I would wear my nursing uniform with my hat. I

came in with my stethoscope ... and conducted a new baby wellness clinic" for Cabbage Patch dolls, Ginger said. "That was my first adventure."

By 1986 with a child and a husband who traveled frequently, Ginger said, "It just got harder and harder to work shift work at the hospital." When asked if she would help expand the family toy business, Ginger agreed.



Visit Fantasy Island Toys at 335 Fairhope Ave. in the hub of downtown Fairhope from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays. Visit online at fantasyislandtoys.com

Together, Jeane, Kathie and Ginger grew the business to four stores – in Fairhope, Mobile, Perdido Key and the Sandestin Beach Resort. "It was a true family business at that point," said Ginger. They built Christmas floats for Fairhope's annual parade, threw a community Halloween party and otherwise fulfilled their mission to create magic.

"It is fun to have all those different locations," Ginger said, but four stores quadrupled the work. When the commute became too much, they closed the stores farthest from their Fairhope base first. After Jeane Byrd died in 2000 and Hurricane Ivan flooded the Spring Hill area of Mobile in 2004, the sisters closed the Mobile store as well.

When a 2008 car accident left Kathie unable to work, Ginger took over operations. "Kathie is the president of my advisory panel now," said Ginger. "She is always a phone call away. I wouldn't want to do it without her."

While Ginger didn't start out in the toy business, she's been all in for 36 years. She is even co-product director for The Good Toy Group, a member-owned cooperative of independent toy stores across the United States and Canada. She helps choose the toys that go into an annual catalog for the 180-storefront membership.

Loves What She Does

"Probably the hardest career anybody could pick is retail, but I love it," said Ginger, who also serves as president of the Downtown Fairhope Business Association. "I love the whole picture of it."

"Business overall is exciting," she said, adding retirement hasn't even occurred to her. "It is exciting because there is so much of it.

"With a single store, Fantasy Island Toys is going to have the strongest year that we have probably had, even more than when we had four stores," she said. ■

Welcome New Members

Advanced Professional Management Inc.
ATHENS

Alabama Pediatric Psychiatry LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Alexander Jay LLC
GULF SHORES

ARB Hospitality LLC
EVERGREEN

Auto Accents of Mobile Inc.
SEMMES

AVX LLC
HOMWOOD

Azalea Hospitality LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Bear Creek Family Practice LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Beshara Group LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Body Logic School of Cosmetology and Esthetics LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Boyce Bliss Food Group LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Busted Knuckle Offroad LLC
CULLMAN

Calverts Collision and Restoration LLC
DECATUR

Chicken Fry'D LLC
CHELSEA

China Doll 8 LLC
DAPHNE

Cindy Meador Interiors Inc.
ORANGE BEACH

Citizens Finance of Sylacauga Inc.
SYLACAUGA

Cutts Food Service Inc.
ENTERPRISE

DataPro LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Double B Missions Cafe Inc.
BLOUNTSVILLE

East Montgomery Q LLC
MONTGOMERY

Eleventh Gorgeous LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Gilbert Creative Services Inc.
ANNISTON

Gordhavri LLC
SHEFFIELD

Gunn & Associates, P.C.
MILLBROOK

Guthrie's Franchising Inc.
AUBURN

H & J Foods LLC
PELHAM

Halter Two LLC
HOOVER

Hancock's Country BBQ LLC
SELMA

Hazmor LLC
MOBILE

Hearing Professionals of Alabama LLC
AUBURN

Hojun Co. LLC
OZARK

I.O. Group LLC
AUBURN

Jason D Howes DMD
MOBILE

Jay Shri Krishna LLC
DOTHAN

J-Dash Enterprises Inc.
HUNTSVILLE

JMTX2 LLC
JASPER

JY-Chavez Properties LLC
EUFULA

Kind Kups LLC
CLEVELAND

King's Pawn & Jewelry Inc.
SYLACAUGA

Kirby-Cochran Center for Dental Health LLC
ALBERTVILLE



Knegard LLC
DALEVILLE

Mayer Investments LLC
FAIRHOPE

Mazzara's Italian Kitchen LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Meredith's Miracles Inc.
ANDALUSIA

Mitt Lary Family Practice LLC
NORTHPORT

Monarcas Investments Inc.
VESTAVIA

N Harvell LLC
MOBILE

New Day Counseling Center LLC
FOLEY

Nichols Nook LLC
SPRINGVILLE

Orange Beach Automotive LLC
TALLASSEE

Pulmonary Associates PA
DOTHAN

Quintard Jewelry & Pawn Inc.
ANNISTON

Ray's Sound Shop Inc.
DOTHAN

RBRS LLC
DOTHAN

Rick's Quality Transmissions Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

Rock Point BWT LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Sand Mountain Family Dentistry LLC.
BOAZ

Shelby Podiatry, PC
ALABASTER

Shoals Hospitality Two LLC
TUSCUMBIA

Shree Kishan Hospitality LLC
FOLEY

Shree Ram Hospitality LLC
DAPHNE

Shubhm LLC
HOMWOOD

Simplicity of Life LLC
ENTERPRISE

Summit Physical Therapy LLC
SUMITON

Swearingen & Nolan Inc.
FAIRHOPE

Techway Automotive 3 LLC
OPP

The Castle Cafe LLC
DALEVILLE

The Current at Cahaba LLC
BIRMINGHAM

The Frozen Goat LLC
CLANTON

The Grille at Trident LLC
CRANE HILL

The Kart Doctor LLC
NEWTON

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

DANA'S FLORAL DESIGNS LLC

PRATTVILLE

Founded 1990

OWNER

Dana Bennett (pictured)

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

5

LOCATION

**164 E. Main St.,
Prattville, AL
36067**

MEMBER SINCE

June 22, 2021

Town Square Diner LLC
CARROLLTON

Turner Physiotherapy LLC
CULLMAN

Tuscaloosa Cheesesteak LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Update Nails and Spa LLC
DAPHNE

VIN Enterprise LLC
GUNTERSVILLE

VN2A Hotels LLC
OPELIKA

White on Rice LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Wiregrass Estate Sales LLC
ENTERPRISE

“It's My Right” – Workplace Rights Employees Think They Have

By Richard I. Lehr and Whitney Brown

Employers often hear “it's my right” from employees regarding a variety of workplace matters. However, many times employees are mistaken about these asserted rights. No constitutional rights extend into the private employment relationship. Thus, a private employer may restrict certain types of speech without worrying about the First Amendment, because no government-provided rights or privileges are at stake. Some of the most frequent and most mistaken “it's my right” employee beliefs are:

“To refuse to be vaccinated.” Private sector employers may require vaccination of employees. The only limitation is accommodations for disability, pregnancy or religion (which apply only to employers of 15 employees or more). See <https://lehrmiddlebrooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOLUNTARY-OR-MANDATORY-VACCINATION.pdf>. A proposed state bill seeks to restrict that current employer right.

“To say or do what I want in my free time.” If an employee makes hate-filled and offensive Facebook posts, gets arrested in a bar fight, or repeatedly solicits another employee for sex in after-work hours using their personal cell phones, his employment may be at stake. Employees in Alabama have no privacy, free time or free speech protections over their private employment relationships; and, as at-will employers, Alabama private sector employers enjoy the right to terminate those relationships when employees act inconsistently with the employer's values.

“To smoke.” Alabama employers may ask applicants if they smoke and refuse to hire a smoker. Employers may prohibit smoking on the premises.

“To have a meal break/rest period.” Neither federal wage and hour law/regulations nor the state of Alabama requires employers to provide breaks, except for employees aged 14 and 15 (mandatory 30-minute break if shift is 5 hours or more) and for lactating mothers to express milk. If an employer provides such breaks, a break of 20 minutes or less must be paid.

“To have a lawyer, spouse, parent, or other representative present during a disciplinary/discharge

meeting.” This may only be required in a unionized workplace. We recommend employers prohibit employees from having witnesses or representatives present to keep the meeting focused on the situation at hand.

“To record conversations or take photographs at the workplace.” Employers have the right to prohibit such conduct and should so notify employees in writing. However, employee use of recording devices has been hotly debated as a Section 7 NLRA issue, and employers should be mindful that their right to broadly prohibit recordings (in the absence of legitimate security, IT, IP or other business justifications) may be curtailed by upcoming NLRB decisions.


“To receive a written statement of the reasons for employment termination.” This is not required in Alabama.

“To wear what I want.” Unless there are religious accommodation issues, an employer has the right to establish dress/grooming/appearance standards. Even if an employer does not have a written policy, or even if an employee's appearance is unacceptable in a way not specifically prohibited by the written policy, an employer may still require an employee to change or not re-wear inappropriate clothing.

“To check my cell phone/text during work.” Employers may prohibit cell phone use unless the employee is on an approved break and out of view of customers. Employers may even prohibit cell phone possession at work.

“To bring a weapon into the workplace.” An employee only has the right (in some parking situations) to have a weapon in her/his vehicle, provided the weapon is not visible and it is secured, such as a locked vehicle. Employees have no right to have a weapon in the workplace.

No doubt Alabama Retail Association members hear employees assert other rights, but these are among the most frequent we hear about. ■

 *Richard Lehr and Whitney Brown are shareholders with Alabama Retail's labor and employment law partner, Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson PC. To contact LMVT about workplace rights or issues, go to alabamaretail.org/employment-law*

Member News

OPELIKA GROCER IS 'GREAT AMERICAN'



MEMBER
SINCE
2006

Wright's Market owner Jimmy Wright received the Clarence G. Adamy Great American Award in July. The award is the National Grocers Association's highest award for government relations. "Jimmy Wright embodies the finest qualities of servant leadership among independent community grocers," said Greg Ferrara, NGA president and chief executive officer. In September 2020, Jimmy testified before the U.S. House Small Business Committee on how the pandemic affected food businesses. In addition to serving on NGA's Government Relations Committee, Jimmy serves on the board of directors for Alabama Retail Association and the Alabama Grocers Association. *Visit wrightsmarkets.com*

JHEOVANNY GOMEZ IN CIVIC HALL OF FAME



MEMBER
SINCE
2005

Jalapeños Mexican Restaurants' Jheovanny Gomez was inducted into the Tuscaloosa County Civic Hall of Fame on Oct. 21. Jheovanny co-owns and manages the three locations of Jalapeños Mexican Grill in Tuscaloosa, Northport and Cottdale. Each year, The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama honors civic leaders and trailblazers who have made an impact on the quality, livability and economic progress of the community. Jheovanny was one of four 2021 honorees. Besides his many roles with the chamber, Jheovanny serves on the Tuscaloosa County Industrial Development and Northport Redevelopment authorities, the Boys and Girls Club of West Alabama board and the United Way of West Alabama board. *Visit jalapenostuscaloosa.com*

'EAT HERE' NIFFER'S PLACE MANTRA FOR 30 YEARS



MEMBER
SINCE
2005

Niffer's Place celebrated its 30th anniversary Aug. 23. Auburn alumna and former Auburn University swimmer Keely Beasecker founded Niffer's Place in 1991, adding locations at Lake Martin in 2002 and in Opelika by 2012. "This has become my family," Keely said during the anniversary celebration. In July to get ready for the big celebration, Niffer's renovated its flagship Auburn restaurant, which prior to its 1991 conversion had been a Golden Corral. Along with a healthy helping of fun, all three locations serve burgers, sandwiches, corn nuggets, salads, entrees, Fishbowls, Nifferitas, cold beer and more. *Visit niffersplace.com*



LONGTIME BOARD MEMBER RETIRES AFTER 52 YEARS IN RETAIL

Best Buy's Fred Roth retired Sept. 4 after 52 years in retail, leading multiple store teams, districts and territories at Best Buy and Kmart. Fred served on the Alabama Retail Association's board of directors from 2004 until his retirement. He joined shortly after he opened Best Buy's Montgomery store in 2003. Fred started his career in 1969 at Kresge, a five-and-dime that later became Kmart. He began as a part-time stock boy and worked his way to Kmart district manager. In his 18 years at Best Buy, he served as store manager, district and territory staff and in field service management to help grow Best Buy's Geek Squad. The key, Fred said, is to "treat people with respect. Your mission as a retail leader is to try to make someone better every single day."

MEMBER
SINCE
2004



Socially Speaking

THE POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

“We're two sisters and moms who believe dressing children can be both fun and simple.”

- KATHERINE McREE and SUSAN DAY,
THE LILI PAD and GIGI'S TWEENS



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

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@ShopAlabama

/Alabama Retail Association

Stay informed at alabamaretail.org



This #MemberMonday, join us in congratulating Katherine Williams McRee and Susan Williams Day, owners of The Lili Pad in Vestavia Hills, on the successful launch of their online store. *Aug. 30 photo*



BuzzCatz Coffee & Sweets Owners Brian and Jodi Harsany and Chef Kimberly Asbury offer up a different special every day along with the breakfast classics. Experience delectable cuisine at every meal throughout #AlabamaRestaurantWeek. Support your favorite eatery! *Aug. 12 photos and links*



We hit the road ... to honor Alabama's Retailers of the Year! Join us in congratulating the 2021 winners: <https://alretail.org/38CTybQ> *Sept. 3 photo and link*



Congratulations to Greg Gregerson, president and chief executive officer of Gregerson's Foods, who was honored for his lifetime of work in the grocery industry. The Alabama Grocers Association presented Greg with the Spirit of Alabama award. *Aug. 16 photo and link*



Throwing back to the 75th anniversary of the opening of Bromberg's. The location is no longer a retail store, but it still serves as corporate headquarters for Bromberg & Co. Inc., Alabama's oldest business. *July 29 multiple photos*



TWEETED @ALABAMARETAIL

We want to take a moment to thank you for supporting the local retailers across Alabama during the Annual Back to School Tax Holiday. Remember to shop locally the rest of the year, too! #SalesTaxHoliday #TaxFreeWeekend #ShopLocal #ShopAlabama *July 19 photo*





RETRO RETURN

ALABAMA RETAIL COMP TO RETURN \$8.1 MILLION IN 2022

Alabama Retail Comp will return \$8.1 million in 2022 to participants as part of its annual retrospective return, the largest return ever.

"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 \$115 MILLION – 28% 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.

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



"I find Alabama Retail Comp has the most competitive workers' comp rates," said **APRIL McCLUNG**, owner of **EMILY'S HEIRLOOM POUND CAKES** in Homewood

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 the full Retro Return history, visit alabamaretail.org/comp/retrospective/

Mark Pierce Joins ARC Trustees

Montgomery native and resident Mark Pierce joined the Alabama Retail Comp board of trustees in August.



Mark and his wife, Christi, own The Tipping Point, a restaurant, bar and gathering spot for people of all ages in Montgomery's Hampstead neighborhood. The Pierces bought the business founded in 2010 in early 2021. They employ 14.

Mark graduated Auburn University in 1990 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

The Pierces have three daughters, Sellers and Alex Pierce and Caroline Gallahar.

ARC Adds Marketing, Agency Relations Rep

Shea Brennaman joined Alabama Retail Comp as a marketing and agency relations representative in June. She helps the marketing and agency relations director promote ARC's workers' compensation program through its network of independent agents. She is based in Huntsville where she represents ARC in north Alabama and parts of Birmingham.



A Huntsville native, Shea graduated magna cum laude from Auburn University in 2016.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

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

MORE THAN 4,300 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.

These 2021 Retailers of the Year remind you to take advantage of all your association has to offer.

Information and Motivation

"The Alabama Retail Association keeps us informed of important government and legal issues that can impact Alabama retail companies. It is also motivating to read in the Alabama Retailer magazine about what other retailers in Alabama are experiencing, especially the success stories!"

- SHERRY HARTLEY, ALABAMA GOODS

Support

"We are passionate about our state and the economic health of all small businesses. We appreciate all the Alabama Retail Association does to support and promote us."

- MELISSA CROSS, McALEER'S OFFICE FURNITURE

Resources

"Small businesses have core expertise in their business, but often need assistance in other areas. We appreciate resources provided by The Alabama Retail Association. We are especially grateful for the opportunity to obtain affordable workers comp insurance, but all resources bring us great value."

- ANNETTE TODD, TODD FARMS

Value

"Alabama Retail Comp has the most competitive workers comp rates; and the exposure our business gets from having an Alabama Retail Association membership provides a competitive advantage."

- APRIL McCLUNG, EMILY'S HEIRLOOM POUND CAKES

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