

Alabama Retailer

RETRO RETURN
ARC RETURNS
\$7.5M TO
MEMBERS

SHOP ALABAMA
Holiday Spending
to Exceed
2021 Record

RETAIL HONOREES
Centennial
Retailers
and Retailers
of the Year

MENSWEAR EXPERT

George Wilder

OWNER OF THE LOCKER ROOM,
MONTGOMERY AND AUBURN

MEMBER
HIGHLIGHT
MELISSA CROSS
Owner of McAleer's
Office Furniture

NEW
STATE
POSTER



From the President



**VOTE Tuesday, Nov. 8;
Attend Nov. 16
Annual Meeting**

On Tuesday, Nov. 8, Alabama voters choose our state's leaders for the next four years or more.

Together, the 4,300 Alabama Retail Association members, their employees, friends and associates can make the voice of retail heard at the ballot box. If

ARA has a working email address for you, you should have already received an electronic Voter Guide.

Please plan to vote Nov. 8 and encourage your employees to vote as well.

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



ANNUAL MEETING

For the first time since 2019, the Alabama Retail Association will hold an in-person annual meeting Wednesday, Nov. 16.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 16

Ravello Ristorante

36 Commerce St., Montgomery, AL 36104

11 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.: Annual and Board Meeting

11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Lunch

Luncheon Speaker

ANOOP MISHRA

Vice President and Regional Executive

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Birmingham Branch

The annual meeting is open to all Alabama Retail Association members, but seating for the lunch and meeting are limited.

Please **RSVP by Wednesday, Nov. 9**, to Jennifer Henderson at jhenderson@alabamaretail.org or call **1-800-239-5423**. When you RSVP, we will send you a confirmation and an agenda.

Rick Brown, Publisher and President

Alabama Retailer

November 2022 Issue 3 Vol 22

Publisher
Rick Brown

Editor
Nancy King Dennis

Design
Copperwing Design

Cover Photo
Brandon Robbins

ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION

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Local Joe's, Rainbow City, Albertville,
Gadsden and Southside

Vice Chairman

MICHAEL GEE

Pants Store, Leeds-based

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Eagle Eye Outfitters, Dothan

Immediate Past Chairman

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ALABAMA RETAIL COMP

2022-2023 Officers

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GEORGE WILDER

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Montgomery and Auburn

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BRETT JOHNSON

Montgomery

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Holiday Spending to Near \$18 Billion in Alabama

Holiday spending in Alabama should near \$18 billion, growing 5% from last year's record-shattering spending.

Alabamians spent 15.4% more during November and December 2021 than they did during the same period in 2020, which was the highest holiday growth rate ever for our state.

Through August 2022, taxed sales in Alabama had grown 8% over the same eight months in 2021, based on the Alabama Revenue Department abstracts.

As Alabama Retail projected earlier this year, sales have continued to grow in Alabama, just at a slower pace than the exponential increase the state saw in 2021. Growth was at 8% in the first quarter and at 7% in the first half of 2022.

A 5% growth rate in the traditional holiday spending months would put taxed spending at \$17.9 billion in our

ALABAMA HOLIDAY SPENDING	
2022*	\$18B
2021	\$17B
2020	\$15B
2019	\$13B
2018	\$12B

**Projected*

state. In the final two months of 2021, Alabamians spent \$17 billion.

Alabama consumers have not stopped spending in the face of inflation and higher prices, but they continue to shop smarter and earlier. Looking for the best deals for their holiday purchases, consumers everywhere continue the trend of stretching their shopping budget out over a longer period. Many began holiday shopping as early as August, while others made a sizable dent in October.

"We don't depend too heavily on any one month" out of the year, said George Wilder, owner of The Locker Room in Montgomery and Auburn, who is featured in this issue's cover story.

Still he said, "holiday business is certainly important to us. The gift giving season represents about 16% of our annual sales." ■

INVENTORY ON HAND

McAleer's Office Furniture in Mobile and Foley Can Outfit an Office Fast

MELISSA MCALEER CROSS HAS A PASSION FOR SMALL BUSINESS
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE GULF COAST REGION

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Brandon Robbins.



Melissa Cross became president of McAleer's Office Furniture in 2012. In 2022, she added owner to her title after buying the business from her father.

Melissa McAleer Cross is president and owner of McAleer's Office Furniture in Mobile, Pensacola and soon to be in Foley.

Her titles also include daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, lawyer, mentor, entrepreneur and businesswoman extraordinaire.

Raised in Mobile, Melissa is the fourth of the seven children of Jim and Camilla McAleer. She says she didn't set out to take the helm of the business her parents began in 1979.

After finishing undergraduate studies at the University of Alabama, she headed off to law school in California, where she practiced law for several years. Her career path then took her to various roles in real estate, homebuilding and office furniture manufacturing and states as far away as Texas and Iowa.

In 2012, with a nudge from an older brother, she answered her father's call and came back to Alabama as president of the family business.

"My brother, David, who manages the Pensacola store, was an integral part in Dad getting me back," Melissa said. "Dad would ask, and I kept saying, 'No,' then David called and said, 'You really need to do this.'"

"I ended up having the right experience to be the exact right person to run the stores," she said. While her father remained the owner, he took a soft retirement in 2015 and Melissa stayed on as president. Earlier this year, Melissa bought the 43-year-old business from her father.

"I wasn't expecting it to feel different, because I've been running it for so long, but immediately it felt different," said Melissa.

"It is a bigger responsibility, but it's also a lot more rewarding," she said. "As owner, you are more in charge of your own destiny."

Early next year in Foley, McAleer's Office Furniture will open its third store with Melissa's younger sister, Sarah McAleer, as manager.

"I love that I have people I can trust, people I love who are so invested in the business working with me," she said.

All About Inventory

"At our core, we have always been a retail store that can deliver as soon as the next business day," said Melissa of her Gulf Coast retail and contract office furniture business that has nearly \$1 million of in-stock inventory, ready for same-day pickup or next-day delivery. Between its three locations, McAleer's Office Furniture has 75,000-square-feet of space.

"People want furniture tomorrow. They don't want to wait six weeks for it," Jim McAleer said in a 2015 interview when

he and Melissa were named the Gold Alabama Retailers of the Year Award in the Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million category. By 2021, Melissa had grown the company to more than \$6 million in annual sales and earned the Silver title in a greater sales category.

With recent supply chain issues, wait times for furniture has grown to six months, but not necessarily at McAleer's.

"We still have a long lead time with some of our contract specialty furniture, but for the

bulk of what we sell, we can literally outfit your office next week with what we have in stock," said Melissa.

Sharing the Passion

Melissa spreads her passion for entrepreneurship, small business and economic development in the Gulf Coast region throughout her community. She serves on the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's board and chaired its total resource campaign in 2020 and 2021, leading a team that exceeded the campaign's goal both years. And she serves on the advisory board for the Melton Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of South Alabama.

Melissa also participates in two mentoring programs – Real Advice Mentoring Program, or RAMP, a program developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Innovation Portal, a Mobile start-up incubator that connects its members with mentors.

Melissa has a "contagious energy" and "positive personality" that "makes her a force to be reckoned with," said Sherry Coker, vice president/private banking manager with River Bank & Trust. ■



McAleer's Office Furniture in Mobile and Pensacola, Fla., employs 20 full time and is open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Visit online at mcaleers.com

And the 2022 Alabama Retailers of the Year are ...

Photos by Nancy Dennis and Brandon Robbins.

1

G. BRENT BARKIN

Shoe Station banner of Shoe Carnival
22 total locations, 10 Alabama locations
2 in Mobile, 1 each in Dothan, Fairhope, Foley,
Montgomery, Opelika, Prattville, Spanish
Fort and Tuscaloosa
Gold, Annual Sales More Than \$20 Million

2

ASHLEY MCMAKIN

Ashley Mac's
2 in Hoover, 1 each in Vestavia Hills,
Homewood and Birmingham
Gold, Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million
(Pictured with her excited team)

3

JOE and KELLI RICHBURG

J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop, Opp
Silver, Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million
(Pictured with Joe's dad, Troy Richburg)

4

BABBIE STYSLINGER

At Home Furnishings, Homewood
Bronze, Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million

5

AMY JASON

Cookie Fix
Homewood, Cahaba Heights and Huntsville
Gold, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million

6

BILL E. STITT

BILL-E's and BILL-E's SMALL BATCH BACON,
Fairhope
Silver, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million
(Pictured with Fairhope Mayor Sherry Sullivan)

7

SUSAN GORDON

Susan Gordon Pottery, Homewood
Bronze, Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million

8

CHAD and KENDRA WESTER

Boll Weevil Soap Company, Enterprise
Gold, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

9

TENA KING

King's Olive Oil Company, Gadsden
Silver, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

10

KRISTAL BRYANT

K & J's Elegant Pastries, Birmingham
Bronze, Annual Sales Less Than \$1 Million

11


JACLYN ROBINSON

Mo'Bay Beignet Co.
2 in Mobile, 1 each in Auburn, Orange Beach, Saraland
and Tuscaloosa
GEE Emerging Retailer of the Year

12

Customers' Choice Award RUSTIQUE RELICS

Rodney and Melissa "Missy" Baker, owners
1,669 votes of 7,684 votes cast

 *Find stories about these
outstanding Alabama retailers at
alabamaretail.org/news/2022-retailers-year/*



More photos at [f AlabamaRetail](#)

Foley Fish Co. Hits 101 Years in December

Story by Minnie Lamberth. Photo by Nancy King Dennis.

"The name and location haven't changed" at Foley Fish Company since 1921, said current owner, Tracy Ward.

Baldwin County's longest operating fresh seafood market was founded in downtown Foley in 1921 by John Hesse. Ward purchased the company in 1999 from second owners, Eddie and Peggy Hesse.

"Over the years I have added more merchandise, more fresh seafood options, dips, homemade gumbos, etouffee, shrimp bisque and much more," said Ward.

The business faces Alabama 59 in downtown Foley at 321 South McKenzie St., attracting locals and those headed to or returning from Alabama's beaches. "Nationally, small businesses account for 48% of American jobs and contribute



Foley Main Street's Darrelyn Dunmore, right, helps owner Tracy Ward celebrate Foley Fish Co.'s Alabama Centennial Retailer status.

43.5% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP)," said Darrelyn Dunmore, executive director of Foley Main Street Inc. "The enthusiasm and work ethic of Tracy and her family reflect that of small businesses not only in downtown Foley but nationwide."

"We are still a family-owned business," Ward said. She and her two sons, Ryan and Cory Mistrot, are involved daily in the operations, along with her husband, Steve Ward.

The business had its 100th anniversary celebration Dec. 1, 2021. The Alabama Retail Association recognized Foley Fish Co. as an Alabama Centennial Retailer on Sept. 15. ■

[More at alabamaretail.org/news/foley-fish-company-centennial-retailer/](https://alabamaretail.org/news/foley-fish-company-centennial-retailer/)

Homewood Men's Store Receives Centennial Designation

Story by Nancy King Dennis.

S.G. Shaia, a Lebanese immigrant, began peddling notions and household goods in 1905 in Jefferson, Shelby and Walker counties. In 1922, he moved his family from the southside of Birmingham to lots he purchased on a dirt road in the "boondocks." There, he built a store, a home and established a garden of figs and grapevines.

Four years later, in 1926, the dirt road became part of the incorporated city of Homewood.

Four generations later, S.G.'s great grandson, Ken, runs Shaia's, an upscale international menswear store on the same site as the founder's garden and home and in the



The first and the second generations of the Shaia family to operate the business – founder S.G., right, and his son, Alexander.

heart of what is now one of Alabama's busiest retail districts.

A.J. Shaia was the second-generation operator. He took over the family business in 1933 and shifted the focus to dry goods and later to junior apparel. The third generation, brothers J.L. and Leo Shaia, joined the family business in the 1950s and by 1964 achieved their vision of reinventing it as a men's store. ■

[Shaia's was featured in the July 2022 Alabama Retailer. Read more at alabamaretail.org/news/shaias-member-profile/ and alabamaretail.org/news/shaias-centennial-retailer/](https://alabamaretail.org/news/shaias-member-profile/)



From left: Todd Denaburg, Rhoda Denaburg Link, Charles Denaburg and Jared Nadler.

Everyone is Family at Levy's Fine Jewelry

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Leisa Cole.

Family defines Levy's Fine Jewelry in downtown Birmingham.

The familial feel of the 100-year-old business began with founder Joe Denaburg, whose personalized customer service and habit of calling customers "cousin," earned him the nickname "Cousin Joe."

Joe married Ethel Levy after World War I and borrowed \$2,500 from his bride's mother to open a store, hence the Levy's name. In the Great Depression, the store became a pawn shop and gold buying business, then evolved with the Denaburg family's interests and expertise into a premier jewelry store, specializing in vintage, modern and one-of-a-kind jewelry.

Levy's has the longest continuous pawn license in the state of Alabama and is the largest buyer of estate jewelry and diamonds in the Southeast.

MEMBER
SINCE
2020

Ethel and the couple's son, Charles, managed the store after Joe died in 1972. In 1988, their daughter, Rhoda Denaburg Link, moved from Chicago to Birmingham and with her New York jeweler husband and her brother, an attorney by trade, moved the store's focus to jewelry.

One of Rhoda's sons, Jared Nadler, joined the family business in 1989, while Charles' son, Todd Denaburg, came on board in 1990. Jared and Todd are the third-generation operators. Joseph Denaburg, named for his great-grandfather, is the fourth generation in the family business.

Rhoda, who died Aug. 19, said if she had a motto, it would be "family first." In its tribute, her family said, "she taught us the importance of family, and that it isn't always blood that makes someone family." ■

"It's like having
a relative in the
jewelry business."

LEVY'S FINE JEWELRY

BIRMINGHAM

Founded in 1922
by Joe Denaburg

OWNER

Charles Denaburg

IN MEMORIAM

Rhoda Denaburg Link
1935 – 2022

Donations in memory:
Jewelers for Children
jewelersforchildren.com

Join the movement
at shopalabama.org



One of George Wilder's favorite sayings is "the well-dressed man will always have an advantage." He is pictured among the suits and trousers at his Montgomery store.

Menswear Expert

By Nancy King Dennis

AN INTERVIEW WITH

George Wilder,
Owner of The Locker Room
in Montgomery and Auburn

Photos By Brandon Robbins

George Wilder began his menswear career when he was a senior in high school in Columbus, Miss.

"The truth is that I was in the store so often, that I 'hung around so much,' they finally offered me a job," George recalls.

All four years while he was earning a marketing degree at Mississippi State University, George worked at a Starkville men's store.

"Upon graduation, I was offered a job by Alex Gatewood, the owner of The Locker Room in Tuscaloosa, to manage that store," he said. "Alex was moving to Jackson, Mississippi, to open a store in the capital city of his home state. So, in 1972, my new wife, Madeleine, and I moved to Tuscaloosa," where the Wilders stayed for five years.

"In Tuscaloosa, I became friends with a great group of folks from Montgomery who encouraged me that Montgomery needed a good, traditional men's store. So, we pulled together some money and opened this store in September of 1977. The rest, as they say, is history," explains George.

Living the dream

This fall, The Locker Room at 1717 Carter Hill Road in Montgomery turned 45.

After the store's first 25 years, George began to grow The Locker Room brand.

In 2002, next door to the midtown Montgomery location, George opened TLR Outdoors, which two years later moved to a shopping center in East Montgomery.

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded
1977

Number of Employees
15

Mentor

Alex Gatewood, owner of The Locker Room in Tuscaloosa. Alex gave me the opportunity to manage his store in Tuscaloosa at a young age and has been my mentor since 1972

Smart Move

Opening the Auburn location in 2010!

George Wilder owns The Locker Room in Montgomery and Auburn, which sells quality men's clothing, sportswear and shoes

"We just keep working to get better and better."

- GEORGE

The Locker Room expanded in 2004 to occupy the entire 6,500-square-foot building in Montgomery's Cloverdale neighborhood with almost 3,700 square feet of selling space.

In the fall of 2010, George opened The Locker Room at 127 E. Magnolia Ave. in Auburn, a 1,400-square-foot store with 1,000 square feet of selling space. "That just happened to coincide with a young athlete named Cam Newton and a football national championship, an obvious shot in the arm for our new business in downtown Auburn," he said. Two years later, TLR Outdoors and The Locker Room in Montgomery combined into one store.

In November of 2019, the Auburn store moved down the street to 175 E. Magnolia Ave. "Ted Wilson of Wilson Investments, who incidentally was our first customer in Auburn, came to us with the idea of taking their space as they had outgrown it," said George. Now, The Locker Room in Auburn is a 2,700-square-foot-store with almost 2,000 square feet of selling space.

"My dream as a young guy working with Alex in Tuscaloosa was to be like him and have my own store one day, but, of course, now I realize that the store is not mine but ours," said

Continued on page 12

Learning Moment

I try to have those each day, reading, listening and paying attention

Wisdom Shared

Jim Blanchard, retired CEO of Synovus Bank, many years ago shared this at a board meeting: "We just want to figure out what makes sense and do that." I love the wisdom and simplicity of that way of thinking.

See more of this story at alabamaretail.org



George of his 15-member team over the two stores, most of whom have worked with George for 20 or more years.

Experts in their field

"We are the experts in helping men dress appropriately for whatever the occasion, business, social or casual," said George. "Our clients rely on us, just as they rely on their attorney, accountant, physician, painter, plumber or electrician."

The motivation for customers coming in The Locker Room remains constant. "Our customer is looking for help to make them look and thus feel better," said George.

"Guys are certainly dressing more casually, but that is not easier," he said. "Folks need our help, perhaps more than ever."

Surviving challenges

"We have survived many recessions, we have seen 21% interest rates, we were turned down by our bank when we wanted to open the Auburn store,"

George said when looking back on what he and his team have overcome in the first 45 years and what lies ahead. "The pandemic was certainly a major challenge – never could have imagined select retail shops would be shut down – but we survived without laying off anyone. We will survive whatever challenge is on the horizon."

When asked what advice he'd give a 27-year-old store owner just starting out, like he was in 1977, George said, "Life throws storms, hurricanes, recessions, cancer and even pandemics at us. Plan, plan, plan – but live – one day at a time. Always be thankful and don't compare yourselves to others."

When faced with dilemmas, George said he draws inspiration from the words a friend said in a board meeting many years ago.

Answering a question during that meeting, Jim Blanchard, then chairman and CEO of Synovus Bank, said, "We just want to figure out what makes sense and do that."

Retail and community champion

George repeated those words to state leaders when the government allowed some stores to stay open while ordering others to close at the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Like he has on other occasions on other issues, George stepped forward as the voice and face of small retail.

Over the years, George has testified before state legislative committees and has traveled to Washington, D.C., for

face-to-face meetings with the Alabama congressional delegation on various topics. He's done countless media interviews on retail issues, including supporting the state's annual back-to-school sales tax holiday and marketplace fairness.

"Small business was being discriminated against with the sales tax issue," he said. He and other Alabama retailers traveled five times to D.C. to tell lawmakers that allowing remote sellers to bypass collecting sales taxes created an unfair

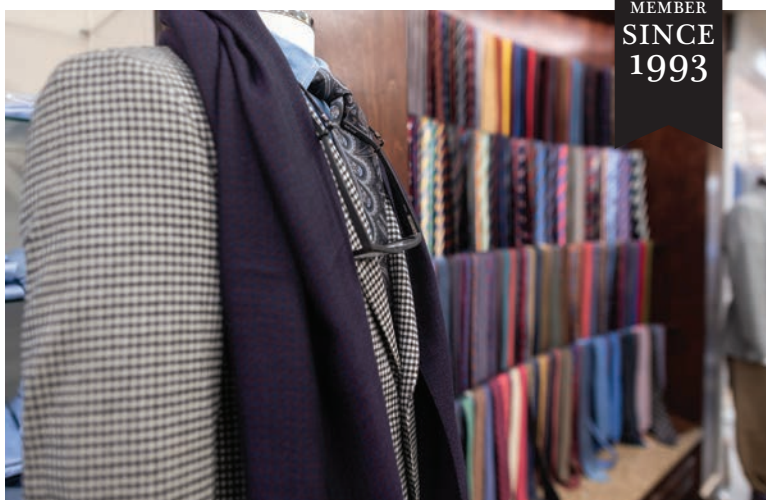
advantage. "Good retailers are not afraid of competition. It was certainly not a level playing field."

George was recognized nationally in 2015 for his efforts on the marketplace and e-fairness issue. In October of 2015, retailers without stores in our state began voluntarily collecting and remitting a use, or sales, tax from Alabama customers. Since October 2018, remote sellers of a certain volume have been required to collect a sales or use tax.

Small businesses like The Locker Room make a difference both in public policy and in a community, George said.

Besides speaking out on retail issues, George gives back and encourages his employees be involved too. "At The Locker Room, we are committed to improving and bettering our community," he said. He and his employees serve on boards as well as in civic clubs, nonprofits and their churches.

"George runs a great business, and he has always given back to the community," said Tom Moore, who has worked at The Locker Room since 1999. "He is a deeply caring and compassionate person. George doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk, every single day." ■



The Locker Room has two stores at 1717 Carter Hill Road in Montgomery, which is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Montgomery through Friday and from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Saturdays; and at 175 E. Magnolia Ave. in Auburn, which is open 10 a.m. - 6 p.m., Monday-Saturday. Visit online at tlrclothiers.com

Member News

PANTS STORES OPEN IN AUBURN, HOOVER



MEMBER
SINCE
1992

The Pants Store opened a new store in Auburn in September and a Hoover store in October. The downtown Auburn store at 138 S. Gay St., Suite 100, in the Shops at Gay Street opened Sept. 20. A 5,400-square-foot Hoover store in Stadium Trace Village opened Oct. 17. The Hoover store is The Pants Store's sixth location. Taylor Gee founded The Pants Store, a third-generation family business, in 1950. His grandsons, Michael and John Gee, are the current owners of the casual lifestyle family clothing chain. Its other stores are in Leeds, Mountain Brook, Tuscaloosa and Huntsville. *Visit pantsstore.com*

SPILLER FURNITURE OPENS "THE JEWEL OF EUTAW"



MEMBER
SINCE
1994

Spiller Furniture & Mattress recently moved from Main Street to a new 8,000-square-foot location in downtown Eutaw. The 312 Morrow Ave. store celebrated its grand opening Sept. 16. The new store, which is all on one level, is unlike anything else in the Greene County town of Eutaw, said Shane Spiller, president of the Tuscaloosa-based third-generation, regional home furnishings chain. Officials and residents dubbed the new location "the jewel of Eutaw" with its modern, stylish look and the latest in furnishings. Spiller Furniture, founded in 1948 by Shane's grandfather, has 13 stores in Alabama and Mississippi. *Visit spillerfurniture.com*

PANINI PETE GROUP OPENS FAIRHOPE SQUEEZE



MEMBER
SINCE
2018

PP Hospitality Group's newest concept, The Fairhope Squeeze Juice Bar and Fruiteria, opened Aug. 23 in the Fairhope French Quarter. The business at 42 1/2 S. Section St. is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Meanwhile, the group's original breakfast and lunch concept, Panini Pete's at 42 S. Section St., has been opening on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights as Panini Pete's Pizza and Pasta. The evening eatery features a selection of paninis, salads, bruschetta, a selection of six pizzas and six pasta dishes and traditional Italian desserts like cannoli. *Visit paninipetes.com and [fairhopesqueeze](https://www.facebook.com/fairhopesqueeze) on Facebook*

GIGI'S MOVES AND THE LILI PAD EXPANDS

Gigi's, a Vestavia Hills boutique for tweens and teens, moved two doors down in late July to a larger, 1,900-square-foot space at 3140 Heights Village. Its sister store for children, **The Lili Pad** at 3138 Heights Village, expanded into the space previously occupied by Gigi's, almost doubling to 3,000 square feet. The children's store celebrated its expansion on Sept. 15. Sisters Susan Day and Katherine McRee are the owners of the stores, which remain connected by a pass through. The Lili Pad opened in 2004 and added Gigi's in 2008. *Visit the online stores at gigsbham.com and lilipadbham.com*



MEMBER
SINCE
2013

COMMUNITY PILLAR

Opp Outdoor Equipment Business Grows from Backyard Venture to Five Buildings on 10 Acres

JOE RICHBURG HAS 'A PASSION FOR HIS EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY' HE GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT SUPPORT J.R.'S LAWNMOWER SHOP

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photos by Brandon Robbins.



Owners Kelli and Joe Richburg pose on one of the many riding lawnmowers available at J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop in Opp. The company services everything it sells.

Joe Richburg worked for 19 years at an Opp automobile dealership.

In October of 1986, he and his father, Troy Richburg, began a lawnmower repair business in a single roll-up garage in the backyard of Joe's childhood Opp home.

Joe continued to report to his job at the dealership by day and each evening serve the line of people waiting for him and his dad to fix their mowers in Opp.

In 1991, he and his dad erected a 30 x 70 metal structure on land they had purchased just up the road. By 1992, J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop opened its first showroom and Joe quit his day job for full-time business ownership.

"I love taking care of customers," said Joe. "You can go anywhere and buy a lawn mower, even order one online, but you're not going to get J.R. service. You're not going to get to call old J.R., and you're not going to get the answer, 'Bring it on in, we'll take care of it.' " It is customer service that sets J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop apart.

While the original purpose of the business was strictly lawnmower repair, "I soon realized I needed to expand by offering lawn and garden products and outdoor equipment, and eventually recognized the importance of carrying a full range of parts," said Joe.

"Our business is stocked with the parts necessary to repair and maintain the products we sell, including lawnmowers, hand-held lawn equipment, golf carts, ATVs, UTVs and most outdoor sporting units," he said.

J.R. Lawnmower Shop now occupies five structures and a fenced lot on 10-plus acres in Opp, including the main showroom/repair shop/covered area for lawn mowers, an office building, three warehouses and the fenced lot for its golf cart inventory. J.R.'s began selling, servicing and renting golf carts in 2000.

"It was just me and my daddy for several years there," said Joe, "but now we've got 22 full-time employees and three part-time employees."

Joe is founder, president and chief executive officer, along with doing sales, service and repair when needed. Kelli

Richburg, Joe's wife and co-owner of the business, is vice president and human resources director. Kelli also handles accounts payable, payroll and insurance.

Kelli, an Opp native who began working at J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop 11 years ago in the office and has been married to Joe for a decade, said, "It is a pleasure to help his business and support his community activities."

Besides selling and servicing lawnmowers, outdoor equipment and golf carts, Joe works about 200 heads of cattle with Kelli's father. He is a director with the Opp Farmers' Cooperative Market and the Cattlemen's Association.



J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop at 1006 W. Cumming Ave. in Opp sells lawn and garden products, outdoor equipment, golf carts, ATVs, UTVs and most outdoor sporting units. Visit online at jrsmowers.com

Opp native L. Joel Smith describes his friend as "a faithful pillar of his community. To Joe, his business is not just a career – it's a passion – a passion for his employees, customers and community."

Joe serves on the boards of the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission and Opp Utilities. He is an Opp and Covington County Area Chamber of

Commerce investor and past president. J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop is also a member of the Andalusia and Evergreen chambers of commerce. "Many of our loyal customers live in Andalusia and Evergreen, and Kelli and I feel joining these chambers is a small way to extend support to the communities that support us with their continued patronage," said Joe.

The Opp and Covington County Area Chamber of Commerce recognized J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop as its inaugural Business of the Year in 2012. In 2010 and 2018, the chamber honored Joe with its Spirit of Opportunity Award, which goes to a "shining star" for the city.

In 2014 and earlier this year, J.R.'s Lawnmower Service was recognized as a Silver Alabama Retailer of the Year, in the Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million and the Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million, respectively.

Kelly Brandin, executive administrator of the Opp and Covington County Area Chamber of Commerce, said, "J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop has had and continues to have a major economic impact on our city and county." ■

Display Enclosed State Poster; Contains New Child Labor Law

Enclosed with this issue of Alabama Retailer, is a free, updated 4-in-1 state workers' rights poster. The updated poster contains a July 1 change to the Alabama Child Labor Law portion of the poster. Please replace your **STATE** poster with the enclosed version.

With your Alabama Retail membership, you receive the workers' rights posters that are required by federal and state law to be posted in one or more conspicuous places at your workplace. These posters can cost as much as \$200 from other sources but are yours absolutely FREE from Alabama Retail!

The enclosed 17 x 22 state poster has a 2022 copyright date. You should also have a larger (38 x 25), 6-1 federal poster with a 2017 copyright date. If you have received free posters from the Alabama Retail Association with



those copyright dates, they are valid and current.

Each Alabama Retail member initially receives one each of the state and federal posters.

If you have more than one location and those locations are not part of the Alabama Retail member database, you may need additional posters. You can order additional posters at alabamaretail.org/posterorder

When the law changes, as happened here, Alabama Retail prints and mails new posters to you.

As of July 1st, 18-, 19- and 20- year-olds can serve alcoholic beverages in Alabama restaurants provided they do NOT work as bartenders, AND the restaurant is certified annually as a responsible vendor under the state's Responsible Vendor Program.

[Learn more at alabamaretail.org/news/lowering-minimum-age-restaurant-alcohol-server/](http://alabamaretail.org/news/lowering-minimum-age-restaurant-alcohol-server/)

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

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

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

Not sure whether you should terminate an employee? Want to double check whether a certain deduction from



an employee's pay is legal? Through the center, you can ask such questions without charge.

Employment Law FAQs

The center also includes employment law frequently asked questions. The

FAQs are presented as video segments with members of the Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson staff. Topics covered include jury duty, pregnancy leave, workplace bullying and social media in the workplace.

[Learn more at alabamaretail.org/employment-law/](http://alabamaretail.org/employment-law/)

Welcome New Members

AH Capps LLC
OPELIKA

AH Interstate LLC
OPELIKA

AJW Industries LLC
MOBILE

Alabama Institute for Sleep Health LLC
CULLMAN

Alabama Multifamily Loan Consortium Inc.
MONTGOMERY

ANG Group Inc.
HUNTSVILLE

Artifactory LLC
AUBURN

Auto Body Rx Two LLC
MONTGOMERY

Bags and Bags LLC
ENTERPRISE

Bell Bergeron Calhoun Inc.
FAIRHOPE

Big Mike's Steakhouse Guntersville LLC
GUNTERSVILLE

Birmingham Breadworks Inc.
BIRMINGHAM

Black Warrior Burgers LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Broken Oak Bourbon Society LLC
ATTALLA

CannaBama LLC
MOBILE

Castillo Tires LLC
TUSCALOOSA

CGM Inc.
ALEXANDER CITY

Christi and Co. Enterprises Inc.
BOAZ

City Bowls Group LLC
HOOVER

Col 317 LLC
DOTHAN

Coldwater Mountain Brewpub LLC
ANNISTON

Conquer Wellness LLC
AUBURN

Consolidated Ace of Enterprise Inc.
ENTERPRISE

CRM Alabama LLC
MOBILE

El Rincon Restaurant LLC
DOTHAN

Emily Knight DMD LLC
DAPHNE

Engel Hairston - Raulston Brown PC
BIRMINGHAM

F. Kent Norris DMD PC
DADEVILLE

Ferus by the Bay LLC
FAIRHOPE

FGW Ventures LLC
MOBILE

Fresh Value Moody LLC
MOODY

Fusion Foods LLC
HUNTSVILLE

Goldstein-Pitard LLC
MOBILE

Gordon Eye Care at the Narrows PC
BIRMINGHAM

Gordo's Way LLC
ALBERTVILLE

Grant Landing Apartments Ltd.
ENTERPRISE

Grisham Enterprises LLC
ANDERSON

Gulf Orthopaedics LLC
MOBILE

Hartselle Sandwich Co. LLC
HARTSELLE

Hazel Mountain LLC
ENTERPRISE

Health Imaging Services LLC
CULLMAN

Homewood Hardware LLC
BIRMINGHAM

J & A Barr Inc.
AUBURN

JASHODA 6563 Inc.
CHILDERSBURG

JB & C Retail Sales LLC
FOLEY

JPB Conversions LLC
DECATUR

Jubilee Flowers LLC
FAIRHOPE

Lister Labs LLC
FLORENCE

Longleaf Primary Care LLC
ANNISTON

MobileTrans Inc.
MONTGOMERY

Music City Bagels LLC
ANNISTON

Navdurga Inc.
ATTALLA

Nemeroff Foods LLC
AUBURN

NLB LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Norwood and Allred LLC
FLORENCE

OBA Beignet LLC
ORANGE BEACH

Old Cove Golf LLC
NORTHPORT

P Lawler Enterprises LLC
GUNTERSVILLE

Papori LLC
TUSCALOOSA

PoCat LLC
ALBERTVILLE

Prithvi Hospitality LLC
FOLEY

Private Gallery Inc.
FAIRHOPE

Prov 163 LLC
PRATTVILLE

Rangeline Coffee LLC
MOBILE

Reaves Pediatric Dentistry LLC
HOMWOOD

River Banks Veterinary Partners LLC
FLORENCE

Rock Star Nails & Spa LLC
MOBILE

Saturn Music LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Selma Pediatrics PC
SELMA

Sneak-A-Peek Prenatal Imaging of Mobile LLC
MOBILE

Southeast Ace LLC
NORTHPORT

Sure Shot Outdoors Inc.
ALEXANDER CITY



Syntropy Group LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Talent Recruiting Partners LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Team Sports Inc.
ANNISTON

Tellicos Services Inc. - Alabama
ANDALUSIA

The Battery Sportsbar LLC
BIRMINGHAM

The Dog LLC
MOBILE

The Oasis Bar and Grill Inc.
COTTONDALE

The Rinehart Agency LLC
COLUMBIANA

The Woodpile Inc.
DOTHAN

Thomas Shelton Agency LLC
OXFORD

Tuscaloosa Running Co. LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Uncorked Events Bham LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Union Springs Home Center Inc.
UNION SPRINGS

Unstatus Your Quo
HOOVER

Urgent Care of Fairhope LLC
FAIRHOPE

VitaLife Enterprise Inc.
MOBILE

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

RIVERWORKS OUTDOORS LLC

MUSCLE SHOALS

Founded 2018

OWNER

Grace and Chad Baker
(Pictured with their children)

LOCATION

**1298 River Road,
Muscle Shoals, AL
35661**

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

5

MEMBER SINCE

June 29, 2022

VRium Techno Park LLC
SPANISH FORT

Whitten Dental Lab LLC
PELHAM

Wildwood Garden Center LLC
DAPHNE

WW & Co. LLC
MOBILE

XYZ Automation Inc.
PELHAM

ZNZ LLC
BIRMINGHAM



Socially Speaking




THE POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED



#MemberMonday:

Congratulations to The Cigar Room for its newest location at City Harbor Guntersville!

🎉 The third location of the premium cigar, pipe and pipe tobacco retailer had its grand opening this past weekend! The Cigar Room, founded in 2011 by Donald Waddell, also has stores in Madison and Florence.

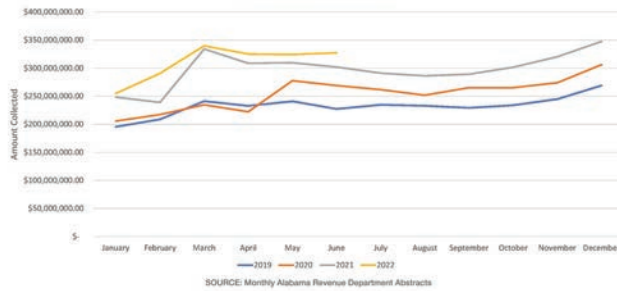
#SmokeOnTheWater
#ShopAL #ShopLocal
#Humidor #Cigars
#PipeTobacco #Accessories
#GiftIdeas July 25 multiple photos    



Ashley McMakin, founder and chief executive officer of Ashley Mac's, today received the Gold Alabama Retailer of the Year award in the Annual Sales \$5 Million to \$20 Million category: <https://alretail.org/3AIT3e6> Sept. 7 photo and link  

“I’m thankful for all the people God has provided to make Ashley Mac’s what it is today.” – ASHLEY MCMAKIN, ASHLEY MAC’S

TOTAL ALABAMA SALES TAX COLLECTIONS BY MONTH 2019 - 2022





ALABAMARETAIL ASSOCIATION





Love to see our Alabama Retailer stories in other publications! @AlabamaGoods #ShopAlabama Thanks @alnewscenter! Selling Alabama: An interview with the owners of Alabama Goods July 12 link share 

In the 1st six months of 2022, taxed sales in AL are up 7% over the record 2021 sales period. June sales tax collections rose 8.37% over June 2021. Although at a slower pace, growth is expected through 2022. Continue to #ShopAlabama Learn more at: <https://alretail.org/3zzLhTk> Aug. 4 graphic and link   


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

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



Alabama's Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday is this weekend! Save on back-to-school necessities July 15-17 while the state and more than 300 cities and counties waive sales tax on school-related supplies and clothing. In some areas, the savings reach 10 percent 💰! #BacktoSchool #SalesTaxHoliday #TaxFreeWeekend #ShopLocal #ShopAlabama July 12 video and link    

@ALABAMARETAIL RECENTLY MENTIONED TWEET

@MobileChamber: @AlabamaRetail has named Mo'Bay Beignet Co. the 2022 Gee Emerging Retailer of the Year. The Mobile Chamber was proud to nominate Mo'Bay Beignet for this statewide award. Read more: alretail.org/3L3kIeq Sept. 14 photos and link 





RETRO RETURN

ALABAMA RETAIL COMP TO RETURN \$7.5 MILLION IN 2023

Alabama Retail Comp will return \$7.5 million in 2023 to participants as part of its annual retrospective return.

“We are pleased to make a significant return 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 \$122 MILLION – 30% 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.

RETROSPECTIVE RETURN DISTRIBUTION FOR 2023

ARC’s \$7.5 million retrospective return for 2023 will be distributed from fund years as follows:

2021	\$3,000,000
2020	\$2,000,000
2019	\$1,000,000
2018	\$500,000
2017	\$1,000,000
Total 2023	\$7,500,000



“The workers’ compensation coverage available to Alabama Retail Association members is important. I’m 100% confident in ARC’s ability to

handle all aspects of our claims,” said **WILL MEACHAM**, owner of **MIDTOWN PIZZA KITCHEN** in Montgomery and Prattville.

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 Brett Johnson 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/*](#)



Meet ARC’s Fund Manager

Brett Johnson was promoted to fund manager for Alabama Retail Comp in March of 2022. Prior to his role as fund manager, Brett oversaw internal operations for ARC and member relations for the Alabama Retail Association. He first joined the staff in August of 2008.

As fund manager, Brett is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the self-insurance fund, including a staff that is charged with sales, claims and premium administration, underwriting and accounting.

A graduate of Auburn University, he has a degree in public administration and communication.

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

Network

"We are so appreciative of the resources and expertise that the Alabama Retail Association provides us as we navigate our business' growth and changes over the years. We believe that our success is only made greater by being a part of the association, uniting retailers across the state with important insights and a network of like-minded businesses.

- **BABBIE STYSLINGER, AT HOME FURNISHINGS**

Issue Engagement

"I don't worry about missing important issues that affect our business, because Alabama Retail keeps us up to date. I know Alabama Retail is watching and always lobbying for the issues that are critical to businesses like ours."

- **CHAD WESTER, BOLL WEEVIL SOAP COMPANY**

Education and Promotion

"The Alabama Retail Association is a source of invaluable support, education and promotion for my small business and many others throughout the state. I'm so appreciative of their service and resources."

- **JACLYN ROBINSON, MO'BAY BEIGNET CO.**

Better Together

"Being a part of the Alabama Retail Association connects our business to the retail industry as a whole, which in turn creates a stronger and more powerful retail industry throughout Alabama."

- **JOE RICHBURG, J.R.'S LAWNMOWER SHOP**

 *Visit us at alabamaretail.org*