

Alabama Retailer

NEW TERM

*Alabama Legislature
begins regular
session in March*

MEMBER BENEFIT

*New federal
poster enclosed;
display now*

BOARD HIGHLIGHT

*HOWARD JOHNSON
OWNER OF SNEAKY PETE'S,
BESSEMER*

EMPLOYMENT LAW

*Resolutions
for handling
employee issues*



LEAP OF FAITH

Jaclyn Robinson

FOUNDER OF MO'BAY BEIGNET CO.

From the President



Retailers, Better Together for 80 Years

In 1943, retailers came together to form this association to give retailers a voice when public policy is made.

Being the advocate for retailers with government decision-makers at the state and national levels is the Alabama Retail Association's core function.

Among the issues the retail community has tackled in the first eight decades of its association are: workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, simplifying remote sales and leveling the field for sales tax collection, credit/finance charges, strengthening shoplifting laws and creating an organized retail theft law, business license reform, tort reform, delivery license reform, health costs/regulations, inventory, income and corporate taxes, worthless checks, labor laws and consumer protection.

The 118th Congress began Jan. 3 and will conclude in January 2025. In March, the Alabama Legislature begins a new quadrennium. Your association will serve as your eyes, ears and voice before both.

It is an honor to serve those who sell food, clothing, furniture, medicine and more to the citizens of Alabama, impacting almost every aspect of daily living in our state.

It is an honor to serve Alabama's top employer. Our industry employs almost 400,000 Alabamians.

Whether lobbying on your behalf in the Alabama Legislature or in Congress, providing cost-effective workers' compensation coverage or helping tell the retail story, I and the entire Alabama Retail Association staff are here for you.

Please call on us.

Rick Brown, Publisher and President

Alabama Retailer

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Publisher
Rick Brown

Editor
Nancy King Dennis

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Copperwing Design

Cover Photo
Brandon Robbins

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Alabama Retailer of the Year and Centennial Retailer nominations due April 14

The Alabama Retail Association will accept nominations for the 2023 Alabama Retailer of the Year and the Alabama Centennial Retailer awards through Friday, April 14.



In its 23rd year, the Alabama Retailer of the Year 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/](http://alabamaretail.org/retaileroftheyearnomination/)

Retail businesses that began in 1923 or before are eligible to be recognized as Alabama Centennial Retailers. Retailers nominated will be contacted and asked to provide a brief history and other information about their business.



[Help us recognize a retailer that has been in business for 100 years or more by filling out the form at alabamaretail.org/centennialretailernomination/](http://alabamaretail.org/centennialretailernomination/)

BREAKFAST AND LUNCH
*At Sneaky Pete's
in Downtown Bessemer,
They Know Your Name
and Your Order*

ALABAMA RETAIL ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBER
HOWARD G. JOHNSON HAS OWNED THE
DOWNTOWN BESSEMER SNEAKY PETE'S FRANCHISE SINCE 2001

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photos by Brandon Robbins.



Howard G. Johnson, a funeral director by trade, seized the chance to also own a Sneaky Pete's franchise location when the opportunity opened up in his lifelong hometown of Bessemer.

On his way to work at the funeral home, Howard G. Johnson often stops at Sneaky Pete's on 18th Street North in Bessemer to get his usual: "Two eggs, bacon, grits, toast and orange juice."

He's one of the many regulars whom the ladies at the drive-thru window know exactly what they will order before they even open their mouth. The only difference is that Howard owns the place.

Howard, the managing director of two area funeral homes, grew up in Bessemer and has raised his children there, so he also knows most of the regulars who come by Sneaky Pete's for breakfast or lunch by name, if not by their order.

"Bessemer is where I have been my entire life," said Howard, who followed his father into the funeral service industry and spends most of his workdays at Johnson Memorial in Bessemer.

"When the opportunity to operate the restaurant was presented, it was one which I could not pass on," he said. "It was a good business decision."

The Sneaky Pete's at 524 19th Street "had been open about 15 years when I bought it," Howard said. "Sneaky Pete's is an institution in Bessemer." Besides its signature hot dogs, the Birmingham-based franchise serves hamburgers, sandwiches, chicken, french fries, hoagies, wraps and a full breakfast menu.

The staple for the Bessemer community would still be on 19th Street had a fire of undetermined origin not swept through the whole 500 block in June of 2012. "We were out of business for about a month, then we moved around on Second Avenue," Howard said, but that location wasn't a good fit.

Since 2016, the business has occupied the building at 400 18th St. N., which had been a barber shop and sits diagonally across the street from the Bessemer Chamber of Commerce.

Even though the business has been in three downtown Bessemer locations in Howard's 22 years of ownership, its clientele stayed true.

"We have customers who've been coming from the beginning," he said. "Our philosophy is to be sure the customer is pleased and has a good experience, so that they will return. We want a satisfied customer."

"I have been privileged to have excellent management caring for the day-to-day operation," said Howard, who sticks to administrative duties and allows "management to do what they do best."



Customers begin lining up as early 6:10 a.m. and it is often after 2:30 p.m. when the last customer is served at the Sneaky Pete's at 400 18th St. N. in Bessemer, which begins service at 7 a.m. and takes final orders of all those in the drive-thru lane at 2 p.m.

In recent years, like all quick-service restaurants, Howard said his Sneaky Pete's franchise has had supply-chain and personnel challenges. The restaurant switched to drive-thru service only during the height of the pandemic. It will continue to be a drive-thru only restaurant until it can staff its dining room properly, he said.

Value in Membership and Board Participation

Sneaky Pete's in Bessemer has been a member of the Alabama Retail Association since Howard

has owned it and he has served on the Alabama Retail Association board of directors since February 2011. He has also served at various times on the Bessemer Chamber of Commerce board.

"A business association speaks en masse for a group," said Howard. "It is important to be a part of a collective effort to advance the cause of individual businesses."

Howard also sees the benefit of interacting with other business owners. "I've always been one who's tried to learn from others in the profession by observation."

Relationships matter, he said. "The relationships that I have established through board service have been immeasurable."

The most important reason Howard says he stays involved in the trade associations related to his businesses is "the ability to be the voice of the small business owner."

"There's always something brewing" in the political realm and "doing whatever little part I can to contribute to a solution is rewarding," he said. ■

Ten New Year's Resolutions for Handling Employee Issues

By Richard I. Lehr

As we begin the second month of 2023, it's not too late for New Year's resolutions. Consider these to enhance your workplace culture and reduce the risk of employee issues or claims:

1. **Make a new hire's first 48 hours the most critical time to retain the employee.** Employees know within the first few weeks of a new job whether they will remain or quit. Make a good first impression. Even before the employee begins to work, call the new hire at home to tell her/him how you're looking forward to working with them. Exchange cell phone numbers. Ask what you can do to make their transition into your workforce as smooth as possible.
2. **Don't let workplace culture disrupters continue due to concern about who will you find to replace them.** "Stinkin' thinkin' " can make work unpleasant for other employees and ultimately affect your customers. When an employee who may otherwise do a "good job" is a cultural risk, counsel and if the employee ultimately does not change, move to termination.
3. **Document facts, not opinions.** When counseling or disciplining an employee, confirm your actions in a fact-based document or email. Why is documentation so important? It reduces the risk of a misunderstanding – you avoid "he said, she said." It also reinforces to the employee what is expected. Finally, it will help avoid/defend a legal claim from the employee.
4. **Train employees regarding your company's policies prohibiting harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.** Harassment is particularly important for a retailer to review, as an employee's right to be free of harassment includes the behavior of customers and vendors. A recent client had a customer make a comment to an employee about her size – yes, she was considerably overweight. When it was reported to the site leader, he followed up with the customer regarding that comment and expectations for the customer's behavior going forward. In some cases, the customer is not always right. In others, the customer is not always the customer.
5. **Before you terminate an employee, ask yourself: Did the employee know termination may occur?** Of course, there are circumstances, such as theft, when termination occurs immediately. Where the reason for termination is not a "dramatic incident," be sure the employee knows the job is at risk. Surprise terminations may cause surprise litigation.
6. **Review how you classify employees as exempt from minimum wage and overtime.** In retail, this most often involves managers. Be sure your managers and other exempt employees meet the legal requirements for exempt status. Those requirements include salary minimums and job duties.
7. **Update the informational posters required by state and federal laws and regulations.** For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently revised its poster. Find this online at EEOC.gov.
8. **Remember an employee does not have to ask for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act – it's up to you to designate the leave.** Also, a workers' comp injury may qualify as a serious health condition under the FMLA and if it is, do not wait to designate the time off for the injury as FML.
9. **Review with employees your company's social media policy.** An employer has the right to consider what an employee posts on social media. Some posts may be protected legally, but trashing the employer is rarely protected. You have the right to consider what employees do 24/7 and should do so.
10. **Finally, promote a culture of workforce engagement.** The No. 1 factor affecting whether an employee remains is the culture; it's not pay. Seek employee opinions, if possible. Ask employees for solutions. Make employees participants in the workplace, rather than spectators. ■

 *Richard Lehr is a founding partner with Lehr Middlebrooks Vreeland & Thompson PC. Members can contact LMVT about workplace issues or other HR questions at alabamaretail.org/resources/employment-law-hotline/*

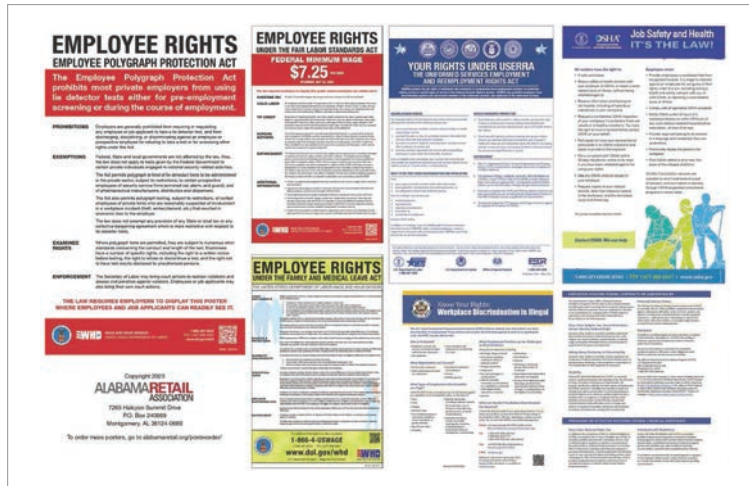
Replace Your 6-in-1 Federal Workplace Poster with Enclosed

On Oct. 20, 2022, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) released a "Know Your Rights: Workplace Discrimination is Illegal" poster. It informs employees of their rights to be free from unlawful workplace harassment and discrimination under federal law. The "Know Your Rights" poster updates and replaces the previous "EEO is the Law" poster.

Employers with 15 or more employees are required to post the "Know your Rights" poster "in a conspicuous location in the workplace where notices to applicants and employees are customarily posted."

This is one of six federal posters that your Alabama Retail Association prints in a single 38 x 25 format and provides to each member location as a benefit of membership.

The federal government requires most businesses to display these six posters where employees, and in some instances, job applicants can see them. Replace your outdated federal poster, or posters, with the 6-in-1 version



enclosed with this issue of *Alabama Retailer* magazine.

Digital 'Know Your Rights' Poster Available

The EEOC also encourages employers to post a digital version of the poster on your website to inform remote or hybrid workers of their rights.

You can find the digital version at

<https://www.eeoc.gov/know-your-rights-workplace-discrimination-illegal-poster>

You May Need Other Federal Posters

Those with business relationships with the federal government, who hire the disabled or are in the agriculture industry may have further poster requirements. Go to Posters under Topics at dol.gov to learn more.

Keep State Poster Up

Your Alabama Retail Association provided 4-in-1 state poster, mailed with the November 2022 issue of *Alabama Retailer* and dated 2022, remains valid and should be displayed in the same area(s) as the enclosed federal poster. ■

MEMBER
SINCE
2013

"I call or email the Alabama Retail Association whenever I have any questions about putting up posters or other documents in our office. They are so accommodating and get back to me so quickly." - KATIE SMITH, PLEASE REPLY

GOOD DESIGN

It's All About Making Clients Happy At Montgomery's B. Barganier Interiors

DESIGNER AND CLIENT BECAME FRIENDS, THEN BUSINESS PARTNERS
TO HELP CUSTOMERS CREATE COMFORTABLE AND FUNCTIONAL SPACES

Story by Minnie Lamberth. Photos by Nancy King Dennis.



Bill Barganier and Beverly Johnson are the designers for B. Barganier Interiors in Montgomery's Zelda Place shopping center. "My job is a lot on the road," said Bill. "Beverly is in the store every day."

In the late 1990s, Bill Barganier was working as a junior associate for a Montgomery interior design firm when he met a client, Robin Kromis, and the two hit it off. “We just became fast friends and still are to this day,” Bill said. “She always used to joke that we should open a business together.”

Eventually they got serious about the idea, and when Bill decided to leave his previous position in November 2000, Robin and her husband Andy joined him in establishing B. Barganier Interiors. “By April 1, 2001, we were up and running and have been ever since,” Bill said.

The interior design business opened a storefront in Zelda Place shopping center in midtown Montgomery, relocating within the same shopping center in 2005. In addition to complete design services to fit any budget, B. Barganier also sells home furnishings or gift items through a unique and eclectic store. “We’ve pretty much kept the same concept. Our concept was that we wanted to be able to be helpful to anyone from a newlywed to somebody who has an unlimited budget.”



B. Barganier Interiors at 2960 Zelda Road, Suite B, in Montgomery is open 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays. Besides design services, the store sells furniture, home décor, lighting and bedding. Visit online at bbarganierinteriors.net

When the store opened, Andy Kromis served as business manager until he passed away in 2012. “I was very blessed to have Andy,” Bill said, noting that the business part is not his strength. “You have to do the paperwork, pay the bills, pay the taxes, and that’s just something that I’ve never had to worry about.” Robin has been the buyer from the beginning and continued her role in the company when she moved to Atlanta, after her husband’s death, to be near their daughter, Erin Connolly. Connolly took over her dad’s role as business manager and is now one of the co-owners. “I feel like we’re almost family,” said Bill.

Today the store has a total of five employees – among them, designer Beverly Johnson. “She is my right hand. I could not do it without her.”

Comfort and Function

Bill can work with what a client already has, including family pieces or heirlooms, or start from scratch. “We don’t have a specific taste. It’s the client that we’re mostly concerned with.” As he gets to know his clients, he learns what they like and don’t like, and they depend on his judgment. As is often the case, when furniture is custom ordered, the client relies on Bill to verify comfort and function.

“Functionality is key,” he says. With the performance fabrics available today, Bill explained, there are ways for furniture to be stylish, comfortable, functional, kid friendly and pet

friendly—and not be a room where you don’t feel you can touch anything. “If I know something’s not comfortable, I’m not going to show it to somebody,” he added.

Wait times for deliveries have eased up lately, but they do make a point to check fabric availability before they show it to a client. “I always tell my clients, it’s worth the wait.”

Happy Clients

Bill admitted, “My favorite thing ever is install days.” That’s when he completes the installation while the client is away, then makes

the reveal as the client returns and sees everything in its place. They’re just “so happy.”

Half of his clients come through referral, and local clients make up about 60% of his design business. Yet even that other 40% often come from a local connection. “My philosophy is a happy client is a repeat client and tells their family, their friends, their neighbors.”

What they’re doing is working. “It’s just basically all word of mouth how this store and my reputation got off the ground,” he said. In April, B. Barganier Interiors is approaching a 22nd anniversary having had their best year ever in 2022. “I just think you have to love what you do, love your clients, totally be fair and upfront. And that’s just the way I’ve always operated.” ■

"One city at a time, Mo'Bay Beignet Co. is making Alabama and the Southeast sweeter," said founder Jaclyn Robinson, pictured in her flagship Mobile location.

Leap of Faith

By Nancy King Dennis

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Jaclyn Robinson, Founder and Owner,
Mo'Bay Beignet Co.

Photo By Brandon Robbins

Before May 2019, Jaclyn Robinson had only made beignets for her family. She didn't make them often, just when the mood struck her.

But for years the name Mo'Bay Beignet Co. had floated in and out of her mind.

The mother of five is a communicator and photographer with a marketing degree. She loves to create and has the tendency to want to name and market ideas.

"I'm the mom that if asked to head up the school bake sale, says, 'Well I probably need a website, I probably need a logo. We probably need to brand this bake sale.' It can't ever be simple unfortunately," she said.

Divinely inspired

In April of 2019, during a college campus visit in California with one of her three daughters, a couple asked if they could pray for Jaclyn.

The husband said something nonsensical to Jaclyn at the time: "I feel like you're entering into a new season, and I hear a celebration, and it has a jazzy feel, in terms of music. I'm hearing the word math, and I'm seeing a lot of numbers, and I'm hearing the words it doesn't add up." Then, he added, "I feel like I'm just really supposed to encourage you strongly to move forward, if something doesn't add up."

Jaclyn Robinson is founder of Mobile-based Mo'Bay Beignet Co. The company has a mix of corporately owned and franchised locations, three in the Mobile area, one each in Auburn, Orange Beach and Tuscaloosa. It also has a Mississippi location and one coming soon in Tennessee.

"Being a light and source of joy in every community Mo'Bay enters is what it's all about. I truly desire to make cities sweeter in more ways than one."

- JACLYN

A month later when her daughter got the acceptance letter for the California college, Jaclyn said God told her "now."

"I just knew instantly, Mo'Bay Beignet Company," she said. "I didn't know what that meant, or what that looked like exactly, but I just knew 'now' is the time."

She started packaging her beignet mix and putting her homemade buttercream and cinnamon syrups in jars, labeling both with the name Mo'Bay Beignet Co., and selling them on Facebook as a fundraiser to send her daughter to her dream college.

Continued on page 12

THE ESSENTIALS

Founded

February 2020

Number of Employees

85 corporate, 130 with franchises

Mentors

I've always relied on my faith and personal relationship with Jesus. I don't look to a single person as a trusted advisor, but I have a handful of people from various walks of life who I'm thankful to know and I will consult with them from time to time for different perspectives.

Smart Move

Stepping out on faith to open Mo'Bay Beignet Co. in downtown Mobile in 2020.

Learning Moment

My learning moments have primarily been relational. Business is built with and by people. To the best of your ability, choose your people wisely.

Wisdom Shared

Everything is hard. Pick your hard. Nothing worth having will ever be easy.

See more of this story at alabamaretail.org



A day after her first Facebook post, Domke Market, a west Mobile wine shop specializing in boutique and gourmet products, called to say its customers would love to buy her mixes and syrups. The products were a hit and more stores called.

By September of 2019, Mo'Bay Beignet Co.'s mixes and syrups were in Priester's Pecans on Interstate 65 and people from all over wanted more.

But the fundraiser turned wholesale business wore Jaclyn out.

"I was ready to quit," she said. "As far as looking at the cost to produce everything I was producing, and then sell them at wholesale prices, it just wasn't making sense."

She sat at her kitchen table looking at receipts, figuring profit and loss margins and said out loud, "This does not add up."

Suddenly, the meaning of the man's remarks in California became crystal clear.

"I prayed about it and felt certain that the next step was a brick and mortar" store, she said.

Location, location, location

"I just knew Mo'Bay Beignet Company belonged in downtown Mobile, on Dauphin Street, if I could find a spot," she said.

While praying, walking and looking for a site, at the corner of Dauphin and Hamilton streets, Jaclyn encountered buildings with wrought iron balconies shading the sidewalks. "This looks like something out of the French Quarter," she thought.

At 451 Dauphin St., she saw a "For Rent by Owner" sign in a beautiful corner building and called. The out-of-state owner who maintains a vacation apartment above the street-level shop immediately became enamored with her idea for a beignet cafe.

The problem was to fry and serve beignets in a boutique space meant bringing the building up to code, which meant more money and more work.

After leaving the city's planning department, she sat in her car parked at Mobile's Mardi Gras Park and asked God, "Are you sure 451 Dauphin Street is where you want your company to be?" She pulled out of the parking space and at the light in front her was a car with a sticker simply reading "451."

"Quickest confirmation I'd ever received," said Jaclyn. "I took a huge leap of faith."



Mo'Bay Beignet Co. sells fresh, from-scratch beignets with signature buttercream, cinnamon or seasonal syrups on the side along with coffee & chicory along with café au lait at its seven locations. Visit online at mobaybeignetco.com

Mardi Gras launch

Thanks to "several blessings and miracles along the way," she signed a lease in October. Mo'Bay Beignet Co. had its grand opening Feb. 6, 2020.

On the first official day of Mardi Gras in Mobile that year, 500 people waited patiently in line to get warm beignets covered in powdered sugar with homemade dipping syrup.

In the two years since, Mo'Bay Beignet Co. has added two other locations in the Mobile area, one in west Mobile and another in Saraland. Mo'Bay Beignet Co. operates in Auburn, Orange Beach and Tuscaloosa as well. It also has a location in Hattiesburg, Miss., and one coming this summer in Memphis, Tenn. The business also has two food trucks and sells during home games inside Jordan Hare Stadium. What Jaclyn calls the company's "tsunami of success" resulted in Mo'Bay Beignet Co. being chosen as the 2022 Alabama Emerging Retailer of the Year.

No advertising

Mo'Bay Beignet has grown through "100% word of mouth and social media" marketing, said Jaclyn.

"I have this amazing volunteer marketing army," she said of her customers, who "organically began taking pictures of the logo wall and 'This Way to Beignets' sign" in each store and sharing them on social media.

"I still have to pinch myself when I think about the success Mo'Bay Beignet Co. has seen in such a short period of time," said Jaclyn. "I am thankful every day that the Lord blessed me with this company, and He is growing, improving and using it in so many ways." ■

Member News

ENTERPRISE'S CHAD WESTER JOINS ALABAMA RETAIL BOARD



MEMBER
SINCE
2018

Boll Weevil Soap Co. co-owner Chad Wester joined the Alabama Retail Association board of directors Jan. 1 for a two-year term. Wester and his wife Kendra have owned the natural soap and body products company since 2017. Wester is the founding chair of Enterprise Main Street, on the executive board of Downtown Enterprise Business Association (served as president in 2021) and has served as an Enterprise Chamber of Commerce chamber director. He worked for 20 years in the wireless industry before becoming an entrepreneur. His previous employers included Verizon, Wireless Advantage Communications, Cox Communications, AT&T Mobility and Alltel Wireless. *Visit bollweevilsoapcompany.com*

MCLIN'S RESTAURANT HAS BAMA'S BEST BEEF



MEMBER
SINCE
1991

McLin's Restaurant in Daleville won the Alabama Cattlemen's Association's 2022 Bama's Best Beef contest. The winning steak, a 12-oz. Certified Angus Beef® ribeye aged 45 days and seasoned with a secret blend of 16 ingredients, won both the People's Choice and Judge's Pick divisions to become the overall winner. The late James Ray "Mac" and Evelyn Hardy McLin founded the restaurant in May of 1968. Their son, Ricky McLin, who took over business operations in the 1980s, is the current owner. Mac and Evelyn's grandsons, Matt and Zach, manage the family business. *Visit [McLinsRestaurant](https://www.mclinsrestaurant.com) on Facebook*

PP HOSPITALITY GROUP WINS 5 STARS OF INDUSTRY AWARDS



MEMBER
SINCE
2018

PP Hospitality Group won five of the 2022 Stars of the Industry awards presented in November by the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association. Nick Dimario, operating partner and co-owner of the group was named the 2022 Alabama Restaurateur of the Year. Pete Blohme, owner and executive chef, received the Humanitarian Award for his work with The Messlords and The PR Foundation. John King with Panini Pete's in Fairhope was the Back of the House Restaurant Employee of the Year; Jesse McKinney with Sunset Pointe in Fairhope was the Front of the House Restaurant Employee of the Year and Johnny Stewart with Panini Pete's won the Spirit Award.

WOLF BAY RESTAURANT TURNS 50 MARCH 1

Wolf Bay Restaurant, Bar & Boutique with locations in Foley and Orange Beach will celebrate its 50th anniversary March 1. The traditional anniversary special will be served – fried shrimp for two with salad, French fries, & hushpuppies for \$19.73, commemorating their founding year. Charlie and Sandra Wrape served 27 dinners on their first day of business in 1973. "I know my parents are looking down with smiles on their faces," said their daughter and current owner, Charlene Haber, of her late parents. Customers have been sharing their favorite memories of eating at Wolf Bay. Those memories and stories will be preserved in a Wolf Bay memoir album. *Visit wolfbaylodge.com*



MEMBER
SINCE
2017

CENTENNIAL RETAILER

For More Than 100 Years, Planters Hardware in Ashland Has Sold ‘Everything in Hardware’

THE RUNYAN FAMILY HAS OWNED THE STORE
AND SERVED THE CLAY COUNTY COMMUNITY FOR 107 YEARS

Story and photos by Nancy King Dennis.



Lisa, Walt and Cole Runyan behind the counter of Planters Hardware & Building Inc. in downtown Ashland. The third-generation family business employs up to five at peak times.

A Runyan has been operating Planters Hardware & Building Inc. on the square in downtown Ashland since 1916, give or take a year.

"The Runyans have owned it since the early teens" of the 1900s, said Walt Runyan, the third-generation owner/operator. Before that, the Garrett family owned the business.

Bruner Runyan took ownership of Planters Hardware sometime before 1920 for sure, Walt said. Boyd Runyan – Bruner's brother and Walt's grandfather – joined the partnership in 1928.

The business that dates to the late 1800s got its name from its original clientele. The Runyan family isn't certain of the exact date because the records were lost in a fire.



Planters Hardware & Building Inc. at 40583 Alabama Highway 77 in Ashland is open six days a week and is only closed for six days a year – Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Visit on Facebook @PlantersAshland. Top: Boyd Runyan; Bottom: Bruner Runyan

Farmers, aka planters, would come in and buy seeds, plows and other farm equipment on credit and pay their debts when their crops came in. Planters Hardware still sells on credit.

Much of what is sold and how it is sold at Planters Hardware is as it has been for more than a century.

Each ticket is still written out by hand. In triplicate. The customer gets a copy, a copy is filed with the bookkeeper and the third copy goes out with customers' monthly statements for those who have a charge account.

Walt's wife, Lisa, who became the office manager for Planters Hardware about a decade ago, said she offered to scan the records and put them on the computer, but her husband and father-in-law said they preferred to maintain a more personalized customer relationship.

After working for a few years in hardware sales after college, Walt joined the family business in 1988 and bought it from his father, Joe Runyan, a decade later. Joe, the second-generation owner, ran the business between 1966 and 1999, but continued to come into the store regularly until last year when the 88-year-old decided to officially retire.

On the days he came in after selling the business to his son, Joe would hold court on a bench facing the cash register.

"Probably eight out of the 10 people who would come through the doors, varying people who weren't even from

Clay County, would sit down beside him and chat and have whole conversations about their family life," said Cole Runyan, Walt and Lisa's son, who has worked at the store on school breaks since he was 10.

No more mustangs, dynamite or firearms

Through the years, the Planters Hardware store has occupied three different corners of the Ashland square.

In one of the windows of the current building on Alabama Highway 77, a local artist painted a mural of what the store looked like in the late 1920s or early 1930s when it was on the same road but the opposite corner. There is also a painting of an ad that appeared in the newspaper about what the store sold at the time. "Everything for the home and farm," the ad reads.

"Everything" included horses, said Walt. "They had a mule and horse barn."

Another big seller that the store no longer offers is dynamite. The dynamite was sold "right from under the counter," Walt said.

"At one time, we were the oldest Browning firearm dealer in the state," but "we gave up our firearms license" in the 1990s said Walt, adding that not selling firearms reduced break-ins at the business.

A different clientele

In the 21st century, agriculture is no longer the chief industry in Clay County. Timber, poultry and cabinet making now dominant and the inventory at Planters Hardware reflects that change.

The store still sells "everything in hardware" as well as building supplies, including water pumps, plumbing, electrical supplies, lumber and paint in the 10,000-square-foot store and warehouse.

And the store cuts glass, threads pipe, mixes paint and duplicates keys, even high-tech car keys.

"We offer our customers cost-effective solutions and personalized service" six days a week, said Walt. ■



Alabama's 12th annual severe weather tax holiday from Feb. 24 to 26 is a time to stock up and save on the necessities at stores like Planters Hardware. State officials purposely designed the three-day, tax-free weekend to occur before the height of both tornado and hurricane seasons. Learn more at alabamaretail.org/alabamasalestaxholidays/

New Legislature Begins Regular Session March 7

The 2023 regular session of the Alabama Legislature begins March 7. The Alabama Retail Report, your online weekly summary of legislative action will resume Friday, March 10.



The Legislature elected officers and received committee assignments last month during an organizational session. The Alabama House has a new speaker and other new leadership, while the Senate

leaders remain the same. In the next few weeks, the 2023 Legislative Roster produced by the Alabama Retail Association will be available online, so you can easily find the officers, committee assignments and contact information for lawmakers.

The Nov. 9, 2022, General Election began a new quadrennium, or four-year term, for the Legislature. Thirty-seven members, 31 in the House and six in the Senate, were newly elected in November. Thirty-five of those non-incumbents have never served in either body before.

About a quarter of the 140 individuals who will write, debate and vote on legislative solutions for our state over the next four years will be brand new to their jobs. More than half will have four years or less experience as legislators.

A regular session consists of 30 meeting days. The amount of legislation introduced traditionally increases in the first year of the term. The Legislature must complete its work within 105 calendar days, so the last day lawmakers could possibly meet will be June 19. ■

No STAR ID Yet? You Have Time; Deadline Now May 7, 2025

Beginning May 7, 2025, every air traveler will need a REAL ID compliant license/ ID or another form of identification for domestic air travel.



Alabama's REAL ID compliant license is known as STAR ID, which stands for Secure, Trusted and Reliable Identification. It has been available in our state since 2011.

The deadline to get such an ID had been May of this year, but late last year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) extended the deadline for full enforcement of the federal law for two more years.

By May 7, 2025, anyone 18 and older will need a REAL ID to board commercial domestic flights and to enter certain military bases and regulated federal facilities.

Alabamians can apply for a STAR ID at Alabama Law Enforcement Agency's examining offices.

👉 [Find a list of those offices at *alea.gov/dps/driver-license/driver-license-offices*](https://alea.gov/dps/driver-license/driver-license-offices)

Before visiting an ALEA office to get a STAR ID, collect the following documents:

- State certified birth certificate or unexpired U.S. passport
- Social Security card or a document with your name and full Social Security number
- Two documents verifying address of principal residence (voter registration card, vehicle registration, utility bills no older than 90 days, latest tax return, or any state or federal document with address displayed) ■

👉 [Find a full list of accepted documents at *alea.gov/dps/driver-license/star-id/star-id-document-list*](https://alea.gov/dps/driver-license/star-id/star-id-document-list)

👉 [For more information, see *alea.gov/dps/driver-license/star-id*](https://alea.gov/dps/driver-license/star-id)

Welcome New Members

3451 Inc.
MADISON

Advanced Comfort
Dental LLC
HUNTSVILLE

AH Academy LLC
BESSEMER

AR Holdings Inc.
FOLEY

Auto Lighting of
Alabama LLC
MOBILE

B & B Discount
Drugs LLC
LUVERNE

Backroad
Bar & Grill LLC
COALING

BAR Nutrition LLC
MOBILE

Besitos Mexican
Kitchen II LLC
ANNISTON

Bigtime Diner
Management LLC
MOBILE

BMH Hartselle LLC
HARTSELLE

BMV Partners LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Boarding the MAC LLC
CALERA

ByrdShot
Properties LLC
WETUMPKA

Calhoon Law LLC
PRATTVILLE

CKOP Food LLC
OZARK

Complete Women's
Care of Alabama PC
ALABASTER

Derrick E &
Loretta V Brooks
Investments LLC
MADISON

Donna J. Madden
IRVINGTON

Drip Fitness and
Wellness LLC
GUNTSVILLE

Eagle Creek Wealth
Management LLC
HUNTSVILLE

EastWest Asian
Kitchen LLC
TRUSSVILLE

Ferus on 41st LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Fly Creek
Trading Co. LLC
FAIRHOPE

Found Objects LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Four Seasons
Tea Co. LLC
MOBILE

Fresh Value
Montgomery LLC
MONTGOMERY

Happy Jack's Tire &
Lube - Moulton LLC
MOULTON

Hayneville Ace
Hardware LLC
HAYNEVILLE

HDV Inc .
MERIDIANVILLE

HFW LLC
AUBURN

Hillstead
Manufacturing LLC
DOZIER

Jasper Hospitality LLC
JASPER

Jillian E. Bivona LLC
JASPER

JJ Wiggins
Insurance LLC
MOBILE

JKR Enterprises LLC,
dba Judy's Place
MOBILE

JP & Son Cafe LLC
SOUTHSIDE



Julia's Grill Mexican
Restaurant LLC
ROGERSVILLE

JWAR Nutrition LLC
MOBILE

Kaufman's
Gun Shop LLC
DALEVILLE

Kore LLC
BIRMINGHAM

KYKCPP LLC
MOBILE

L&M Marine LLC
STAPLETON

Lee Street
Enterprises LLC
ENTERPRISE

Love Love Inc.
HUNTSVILLE

Lucky Dawg
Resort LLC
PRATTVILLE

Lucy's Cafe LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Meat Depot
Sylacauga LLC
SYLACAUGA

Missions Boutique LLC
NORTHPORT

Mo'Bay Beignet Co.
Saraland LLC
SARALAND

Nehal2022 LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Pinche Cater Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

POST Spring Hill LLC
MOBILE

Rae's Kitchen LLC
FAIRHOPE

Retail Strategies LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Revelry LLC
TUSCALOOSA

RNM Enterprises LLC
MOBILE

Saurav LLC
NORTHPORT

Seasoned LLC
BIRMINGHAM

Seva Hospitality LLC
FAIRHOPE

SFMV Newco LLC
BIRMINGHAM

SHIVSAI786 LLC
HEADLAND

Smarter Every Day LLC
DECATUR

Southern Collision
Center LLC
ENTERPRISE

Stephanies Flowers Inc.
TUSCALOOSA

Sunshine Family LLC
MADISON

Techway Automotive
4 LLC
DOTHAN

The Furniture Factory -
Providence LLC
HUNTSVILLE

The Goal Line LLC
TUSCALOOSA

The Marble Ring LLC
BIRMINGHAM

FEATURED NEW MEMBER

CINDY'S CAFÉ LLC PRATTVILLE

Founded 2008,
dba as Cindy's
Café since 2019

OWNER

Cindy Stephens
(pictured)

LOCATION

205 S. Court St.,
Prattville, AL,
36067

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

15

MEMBER SINCE

Sept. 1, 2022

The Potting Shed North
College LLC
AUBURN

Therapy South -
Carmichael Road LLC
MONTGOMERY

Thomas L. Whitaker
DMD PC
DEMOPOLIS

TLW Ventures Inc.
WEDOWEE

VeloCity Cycles LLC
TUSCALOOSA

Waterfowl
Mercenary LLC
SCOTTSBORO

Webster's Family
Restaurants LLC
DOTHAN

Weston Gray LLC
OXFORD



Socially Speaking

THE POSTS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

“I love taking care of customers.” & “It is a pleasure to help his business.”

- JOE AND KELLI RICHBURG, J.R.'s LAWNMOWER SHOP



J.R.'s Lawnmower Shop employs 25 and occupies five buildings on 10 acres. Read the full feature at alretail.org/3V3A3Q7. #MemberMonday #ShopOpp #ShopAlabama Nov. 21 photo and link [f](#) [in](#) [@](#) [t](#)

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

[f](#) /Alabama Retail

[t](#) @AlabamaRetail

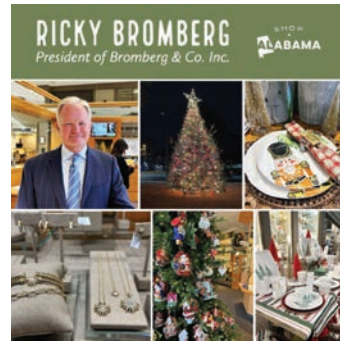
[@](#) @ShopAlabama

[in](#) /Alabama Retail Association

[h](#) Stay informed at alabamaretail.org



Our thoughts and prayers are with downtown Enterprise, which experienced a major fire Sunday. Main Street small businesses are the heart of every community and represent the dreams and livelihood of families. <https://lnkd.in/gSEKeF5S> #MainStreet #DeeplyRooted #EverRising #EnterpriseStrong Oct. 17 photo and link [in](#) [f](#) [@](#) [t](#)



"We get to be part of the happiest occasions for all our customers' lives," said Ricky Bromberg, president of Bromberg & Co. Inc. "We sell happy memories." ... Shop trees & stars (of the variety) inside their Mountain Brook & Summit stores. #Jewelry #China #GiftIdeas #ShopMountainBrook #ShopBirmingham #ShopAlabama Nov. 30 photos [@](#) [t](#) [in](#) [f](#)



"The holiday season is where it is at," said Jeff Pizitz, president of Pizitz Management Group, which owns Gus Mayer in Birmingham. The Better Business Bureau Serving Central and South Alabama and the Alabama Retail Association encourage you to shop at trusted retailers, whether in person or online, this holiday season. #ShopSmart #ShopLocal #ShopAL Nov. 23 photos, Dec. 1 video link [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [in](#)



In September of 1977, George Wilder opened The Locker Room in Montgomery to fill a need for a quality menswear store. The Montgomery store turned 45 this fall. @tlrclothers ... Read the full story at <https://alretail.org/3h23luo> Nov. 1 photos and link [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [in](#)

RECENTLY RETWEETED @ALABAMARETAIL

"I'm hoping 2022's Christmas is going to be the best yet," said David Little, owner of Tucker Pecan in downtown Montgomery, an Alabama Retail member since 2000. #ShopAlabama #ShopALForTheHolidays <https://twitter.com/wsf12news/status/1587261426783092737> Oct. 31 video [t](#)





All Day, Every Day

MANAGE YOUR WORKERS' COMP ACCOUNT

Alabama Retail Comp has a self-service web portal where you can manage your workers' comp account 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you are a verified contact for your Alabama Retail Comp account, you can:

- ✓ View your policy
- ✓ Pay your bill
- ✓ Sign up for and manage auto pay
- ✓ Report an injury.

To request a portal login, complete the form at alabamaretail.org/requestlogin/

The form includes a drop down for you to indicate whether you are an employer participant or an insurance agent. Be sure to choose your correct role.

Logins are issued during ARC's business hours, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, to verified contacts.

If you are not currently listed as a contact on your account, ARC must confirm permission for a login with a current contact before access can be granted.



The portal was created for the convenience of doing business online whenever you want without having to call during ARC's business hours.

Many ARC participants already use the portal and like its ease. The portal login is clearly visible at the top of the home and every other page at alabamaretail.org.

Once you are confirmed, you will receive an email with your username and a link to set your password.

One login can be used for multiple accounts.

The portal is the fastest way to pay your bill and initiate a claim with Alabama Retail Comp.

Start using the portal today!

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.

Take advantage of all your association has to offer.

“The Alabama Retail Association allows me to focus on my business, rather than worry about what’s happening in Montgomery and Washington. It always works to better the position of its members.”

-CHAD WESTER, BOLL WEEVIL SOAP CO..

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.

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](http://alabamaretail.org)