

Greater Huntsville

BUSINESS Today

Inside



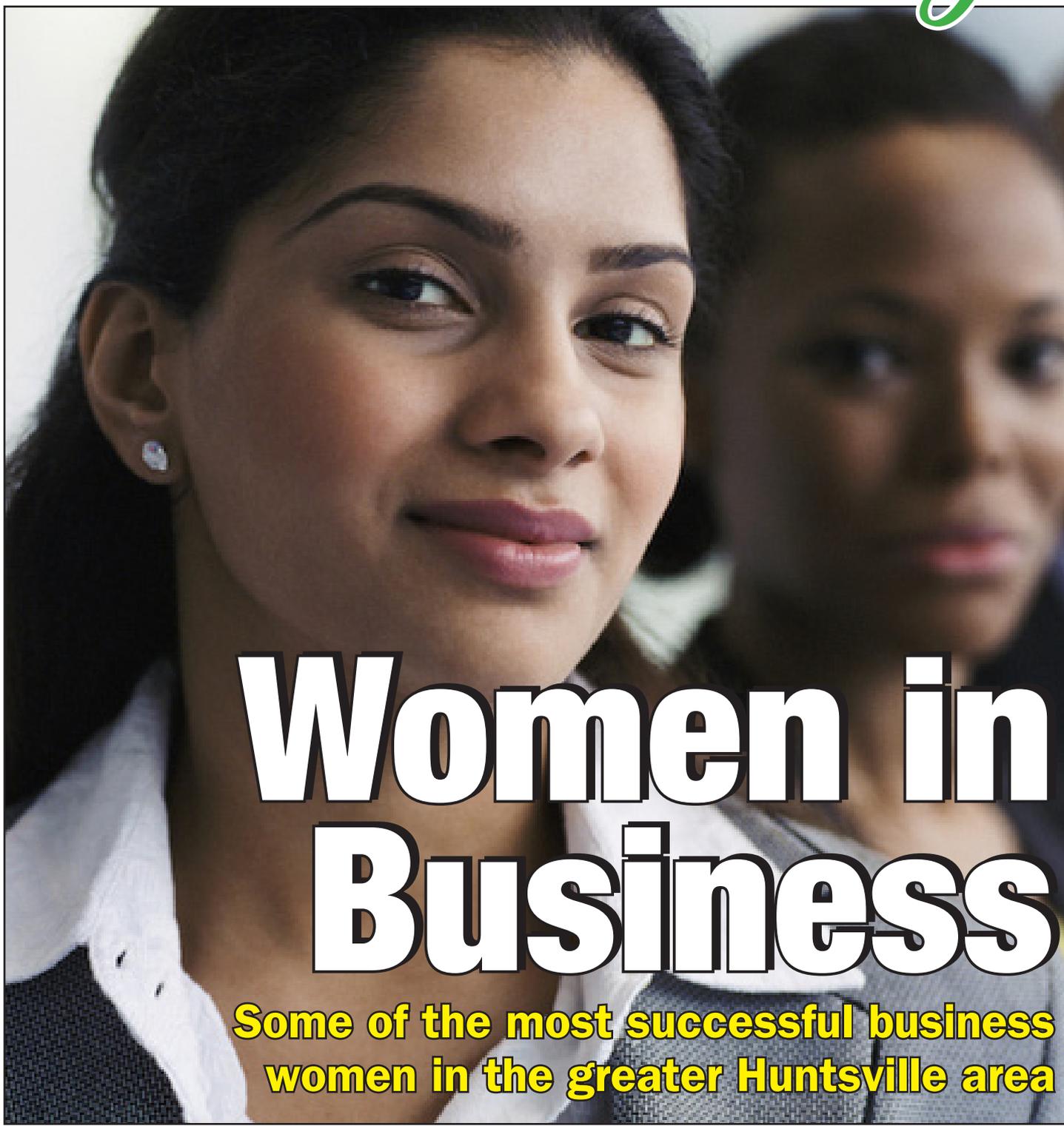
Grants awarded to improve storefronts in South Huntsville



Madison CEO program training future entrepreneurs



Foundation, companies announce huge giving donation



Women in Business

Some of the most successful business women in the greater Huntsville area

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EDITOR

John Few

john.few@madisoncountyrecord.com

GENERAL MANAGER

French Salter

ADVERTISING SALES

Donna Counts

256-714-7152

donna.counts@theredstonerocket.com

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WELCOME TO WOMEN IN BUSINESS - For the last 20 years, more women have opted to strive to become top executives or start their own businesses than ever before, even outpacing men, and they have been thriving. The reality is that women can, and should, have a large presence in the business world. The greater Huntsville area is filled with hundreds of perfect example of women who are leaders in the workplace and within the communities they serve. Over the next few pages, we will spotlight a few of those women who are making a big difference in the world around them. Welcome to our Business Today special issue of Women in Business. - John Few, editor

Dr. Pam Hudson: a proven leader in the healthcare success of North Alabama

By STAFF REPORTS

Dr. Pam Hudson has been a very influential healthcare leader in North Alabama with a solid reputation for success.

Dr. Hudson has been at Crestwood Medical Center for more than 30 years and has served as CEO since 2007 after serving in numerous other senior executive roles including Chief Operating Officer and Chief Medical Officer.

Led by Dr. Hudson, Crestwood Medical Center is a 180-bed, acute care community

hospital employing over 1,000 employees and has a medical staff of more than 600 physicians. To accommodate the community's tremendous growth and need for more healthcare and access to services, Crestwood has renovated and expanded several areas including Surgery, Emergency Department, Cardiac Care, Women's Services, Inpatient Units, and several Outpatient Services over the last few years.

During her tenure as CEO, Dr. Hudson has been responsible for the recruitment of almost 100 new physicians to the Huntsville



Dr. Pam Hudson

INTUITIVE fosters equal success opportunities, named one of the Best Workplaces for Women

By STAFF REPORTS

When it comes to women in the workplace, more companies are learning that creating an inviting, professional and safe environment for women to achieve their full potential in business is also a major key in the success of the company.

Huntsville-based Intuitive Research and Technology Corporation (INTUITIVE) not only has embraced that belief, but has excelled in it. The aerospace engineering and analysis firm has been named one of the 2019 Best Workplaces for Women by Great Place to Work and FORTUNE magazine. They recently acquired that distinction for the fourth time this fall.

To determine the ranking, Great Place to Work analyzed anonymous survey feedback representing more than 4.6 million U.S. employees.

The majority of the ranking is based

on what women themselves report in a 60-question survey about their workplace, and how fairly those experiences compare to men's reports of the same workplaces.

"It is always INTUITIVE's practice to provide a work environment built on fairness and inclusion for all employees. We are constantly searching for ways to help employees succeed and follow their goals and dreams in their career," said Donna Meadows, INTUITIVE Senior Vice President.

Developing the right atmosphere where the people within the company have the same and best opportunities to excel has been the core strength behind INTUITIVE's success. "Establishing workplace environment where everyone feels secure has been crucial in that goal," says INTUITIVE President, Vergenia Shelton.

"I believe workplace appropriateness is so critical because employees need a safe

and fair environment to do their jobs so that they can concentrate on doing the best job possible," Shelton says. "Our founders did a fabulous job of laying the foundation for a professional, appropriate workplace and work culture."

Shelton is a perfect example of how the right kind of atmosphere can help foster the potential to reach any goal.

Shelton's passion for engineering can be seen through her outstanding leadership, according to Rey Almodóvar, INTUITIVE Co-founder and CEO. "Vergenia is a proven leader and the ultimate professional who exemplifies INTUITIVE's standing reputation as the innovative partner our customers trust," he said. "This is an exciting time for the INTUITIVE family and I am honored to be working alongside Vergenia as we continue to grow our business," Almodóvar added.

See INTUITIVE on page 22



INTUITIVE President Vergenia Shelton

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Yvette Banks

RFCU's Yvette Banks uses her business success to inspire others to success

By STAFF REPORTS

Success for Yvette Banks is not just reaching a personal goal in life or business; for her, it's about being that inspiration to encourage others for success. That's what Banks does on a daily basis through her position as the Executive Vice President and Chief Retail Officer at Redstone Federal Credit Union®.

Banks tells every new employee that, regardless of their position, their goal should always be to do their best. "Determination, a passion to serve others, integrity, and team work will take you further than you could ever imagine," she said.

That's advice Banks has lived out and is a testament to where hard work can take someone. Thirty-four years ago, she started as a teller and has worked her way up through the ranks to be the Executive Vice President of Alabama's largest credit union. Along the way she has kept her focus on the philosophy of Redstone, "People Helping People."

Redstone's mission, core values, and cultural beliefs have positioned it as a national leader, and is a big reason why the credit union was named the Credit Union of the Year by NAFCU in 2018, and why Money® Magazine named Redstone the 2017 'Best Bank' in Alabama.

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Faith and a passion to help others guides CFO in her role at Huntsville Hospital

By JOHN FEW

When you look at the numbers, Huntsville Hospital Health System CFO Kelli Powers has a daunting task waiting on her each morning when she goes to work. She is in charge of the financial health of the second largest hospital in Alabama. Every decision she makes can potentially impact hundreds to thousands of people.

Under the leadership of CEO David Spillers, Huntsville Hospital Health System has grown to include hospitals in Huntsville, Madison, Athens, Decatur, Sheffield, Moulton and Red Bay. It operates with an annual economic impact exceeding \$1 billion with more than 1,800 patient beds and 14,000 employees spread across North Alabama.

On average, all Madison County campus admitted more than 62,190 patients and treated more than 163,600 emergency patients per year.

What is her formula for success when what you do affects so many? Striving to be better every day and strong faith. "Having that strong faith keeps you going," Powers said. "The higher and higher you go in leadership, the more stress and pressure is there. You have more and more challenging decisions to make and those decisions will often affect a lot of people."

"I also focus on what I can improve every day," she continued. "That's one of the reasons I love working in healthcare even though I am in the financial piece, which is so important to what we do here. If we didn't have money we wouldn't be able to do a lot of things that we do. We have to grow for the future and we have so many patients and people in our community that depend on us."

Helping others has always been Powers' passion in life. In fact, when she started out in choosing a career, becoming a hospital executive was not even a goal she entertained. It was to go to law school and become a prosecutor.



Huntsville Hospital CFO Kelli Powers

"I grew up in the very rural small town Lanett, Alabama," she said. "My parents were very blue collar, hardworking people. When I went to college, my main goal was just to graduate and get a degree. I have always had the philosophy that I just want to do what I can do to help people and I hoped that whatever career path I choose would do that."

That was why becoming a prosecutor appealed to her, because she wanted to fight crime and injustice.

"I worked for a law firm and one of the lawyers told me, 'I really don't think you need to be a prosecutor' because it can be very dangerous at times. He said, 'I think you ought to get an accounting degree,' so I did."

Powers got her first accounting job at Northport Hospital in Tuscaloosa.

"From there I took as much opportunity as I could to soak up as much as I could and learn everything about healthcare," Powers said. "I also tried to have a very good work ethic, which I think is very important. I've been blessed. My life has been based on what God has wanted me to do and how I can help people."

Over the past 30 years, God certainly has opened doors for Powers. Because of her

See POWERS on page 13

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Huntsville Hospital Health System includes Huntsville Hospital, Huntsville Hospital for Women & Children, Madison Hospital, Athens-Limestone Hospital, Decatur Morgan Hospitals, Helen Keller & Red Bay Hospitals, Marshall Medical Centers, Lawrence Medical Center, Russellville Hospital and Lincoln Health System in Tennessee.

Alice Lessmann guides Signalink's strategy, security and solace

By GREGG PARKER

Alice Lessmann has pinpointed the winning combination to operate a successful, thriving business.

Experience and background, first and foremost. Understanding, for each customer's unique needs. And outreach, which betters the community.

Lessmann is both Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Facility Security Officer (FSO) of Signalink Inc. "Signalink was founded in July 2005 by two people who had a vision of establishing a company with high moral and ethical standards that developed unparalleled technical solutions to the most difficult challenges facing our customers," Lessmann said.

Initially, the Lessmanns worked out of their garage to support only one customer.



Lessman

Currently, Signalink has 49 employees in Alabama, California, Washington and Maryland that support 25-plus customers. Husband Steve Lessmann is Signalink President.

Recently, Signalink was honored as "Best Business of the Year" with Madison Chamber of Commerce's 2019 Best in Business Awards. In addition, Signalink earned the award for "Best Professional Services Business."

Opened in 2017, the Signalink facility has 11,500 square feet on an eight-acre campus on Slaughter Road. "We have experienced 110-percent growth this past year," she said.

"As our customer base has increased over the years, our capabilities have evolved," Lessmann said. Originally, the company developed hardware/software solutions to translate and move large quantities of data. Today, their dedicated workforce includes developers, systems administrators, cybersecurity experts, engineers (systems, mechanical, electrical, aerospace, test) and analysts.

This workforce supports aviation, missile/ground platforms and enterprise and tactical-level software systems. Employees can build, assemble, integrate and test final products to support Warfighter needs.

"More importantly than how we have changed is how we have not," Lessmann said. "Our moral and ethical standards have never wavered. Our faith has continued to see us through both the good times and bad

that all businesses experience."

As CEO, Lessmann creates strategic direction, manages overall operations and defines major corporate decisions. As FSO, she supervises needs for clearances -- for both employees and the facility's Top Secret clearance.

In its family-based culture, Signalink has prospered and confirmed values that reflect in the staff, with Alice Lessmann setting the company's tone, vision and culture. Corporate philosophy is built around servanthood focused on these tenets:

* People -- Defining a work environment so employees can maximize enriching experiences in a family-style atmosphere that delivers meaningful results to customers.

* Customers -- Deliver uncompromising solutions in technical services/solutions, Social Worker at Harris Home; Reggie McKenzie, Executive Director of Harris Home;

See LESSMAN on page 23 and Alice Lessmann, CEO of Signalink. CONTRIBUTED



Signalink employees recently donated \$4,000 to Harris Home for Children. The check presentation involved Satyrinn Grace, Chair of Signalink Serves, from left; Geraldine Thompson, Social Worker at Harris Home; Reggie McKenzie, Executive Director of Harris Home; and Alice Lessmann, CEO of Signalink. CONTRIBUTED



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Forever Grateful describes Lisa Grice's journey from educator to chef and small business owner

By JOHN FEW

Forever Grateful is not just the name of one of the newest catering and food truck company, it is the perfect way to describe small business owner Lisa Grice.

Equipped with a deep family heritage of New Orleans and county-style cooking and a passion for blessing others, Lisa has been delighting the taste-buds of everyone who samples one of her culinary creations.

Forever Grateful, LLC, Authentic Nawlins Food and Lagniappe, provides food services including personal chef, catering, meal prep and delivery.

Lisa's story is one of faith, trust in God's direction for her life and the obedience to

follow it.

In many ways, Lisa is like the food she cooks - passionate. For 14 years as an educator in the Madison City School System, Lisa was passionate about her love of teaching and dedication to her students at Columbia Elementary School. She has been passionate in her desire to bless others through her God-given natural ability to create southern masterpieces in the kitchen. Most of all, Lisa has been passionate about her faith and devotion to God.

It was a leap of faith for Lisa to leave her job as the assistant principal at Columbia Elementary School this July to pursue her passion for cooking. She had been a fifth grade teach-

See GRATEFUL on page 23



Lisa Grice doing what she loves. Photo by Joshua Berry

Madison Market President for Progress Bank enjoys that sweet sense of belonging

By STAFF REPORTS

When Beth B. Richardson moved to Madison she found a perfect fit - an ingredient that has made her business success even sweeter.

"That feeling of belonging somewhere is amazing. When you can walk into a restaurant and they know your order and a good portion of the people in the restaurant say, 'Hi, Beth! Is Rodney behaving?,' it makes you feel like you really belong," Beth said.

Beth is the Madison Market President for Progress Bank and Trust, a position that affords the great opportunity to have a strong connection to the community she calls home.

Twelve years ago, Beth moved to Madison, and her daughter was enrolled in private school. "With her big personality, I knew it would be only a matter of time before she

would desire to attend public school. Madison, and Madison City Schools, was a 'win-win' choice for us."

Beth's husband Rodney K. Richardson is Principal of Horizon Elementary School. Daughter Jaylin Caroline graduated from James Clemens High School last spring.

Beth began her banking career in Huntsville more than 18 years ago with experience in consumer/retail banking, business banking, private banking, regional management and most recently, Madison Market President for Progress Bank.

Beth strives to provide the highest level of customer relations and service; to monitor customers' changing needs; and to recommend strategies using Progress' products and services. She serves on the Product, Technology and Assets committee and the Liability Management committee.

In volunteering, Beth serves the Hunts-

ville and Madison communities through her involvement on the boards for Madison Hospital, Huntsville Hospital Healthcare Authority Board, Committee of 100, Huntsville/Madison County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Huntsville Botanical Garden, Huntsville Hospital Foundation and the Madison Police Foundation.

She was a member of Leadership Huntsville/Madison County Class 21 and Leadership Alabama Class 20.

"My civic involvement has enabled me to positively impact education, politics, healthcare services and economic development," she said.

In calling Madison home, Beth says that perfect fit has made her goal of serving others and her community something she wakes up looking forward to every morning. "It's a win-win," she said. "I love it here."

Gregg Parker contributed to this story.



Richardson

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Dr. Reidy impacting other women through her success in healthcare

By STAFF REPORTS

As one of the nation's leading specialists in her field, Dr. Anne Marie Reidy's success is helping to make life better for other women.

Dr. Anne Marie Reidy is a Board Certified OB-GYN and current Chair of Huntsville Hospital's OB/GYN Department. She also owns Women4Women OBGYN in Huntsville.

After graduating from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, she completed her residency at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center. Prior to the establishment of her medical career, Dr. Reidy was also a practicing attorney for 10 years, having earned her law degree from Georgetown University Law Center.

Dr. Reidy is an active member of the community, and is currently serving on the Board of Huntsville Hospital Foundation.

She is a founding member and Vice President of the Alabama Chapter of the International Women's Forum.

In her volunteer efforts, Dr. Reidy has raised money for local pediatric clinics through the HEALS organization, and has previously served on the board of Girls Incorporated of Northern Alabama, the Community Foundation of Huntsville/Madison County, and the Madison County Medical Society.

She also donated her expertise during a surgical mission expedition to the Dominican Republic, and regularly volunteers her time speaking to breast cancer survivors in the local community.

When Dr. Reidy is not caring for patients or serving the community, she pursues her other passions which include: cooking, reading, exercising, traveling, and spending time with her husband and three grown daughters.



Dr. Anne Marie Reidy

POWERS from page 8

husband's job, the Powers family moved to various locations in the state. Each one opened up a new opportunity for Powers to grow and excel.

She was previously the Chief Executive Officer at Athens-Limestone Hospital for 4 years and the prior to that was also the CEO at Lanier Health Services in Valley, Alabama.

She has also worked at several hospitals across the state of Alabama including UAB Baptist of Montgomery, East Alabama Medical Center and The DCH Health System.

In her volunteer efforts, Powers chairs and serves on numerous boards and is very involved in her community. In 2012 she was named Citizen of the year for Limestone County by the Chamber of Commerce and in 2015 one of Alabama's most powerful and influential women. She is very active with the American Heart Association, chairing the Huntsville Heart Walk in 2020.

"Helping people is what keeps me going in my role," she said. "I try to get up every day and do the best I can do in my role and work really hard at that. The Lord blesses me as I do and I really depend on him to tell me what to do every day."

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South Huntsville businesses to get improved store fronts thanks to RFCU

By STAFF REPORTS

The Façade Improvement Grant Program, sponsored by Redstone Federal Credit Union, is providing 11 small businesses in the South Huntsville Main Street District the opportunity to improve the façade of their storefront through grant funds.

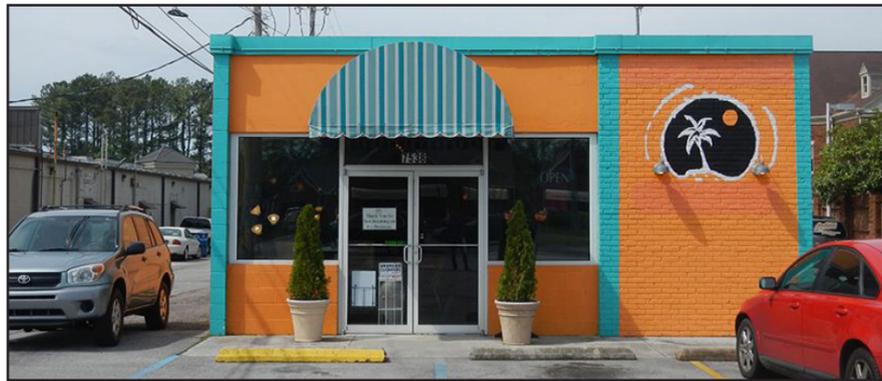
Façade Improvement Grants are awarded to business owners who applied for the grant and demonstrated the positive impacts individual building improvements to their storefront could have on overall appearance, quality, growth and vitality of the South

Huntsville district.

The program will provide up to 2:1 matching grant funds for eleven projects with grant awards ranging from \$800 to \$4,000. The total economic impact of all of these projects combined is a \$184,000 investment in the South Huntsville community.

The following businesses and or shopping centers will be utilizing the matching grant funds to complete façade renovations, building enhancements, or landscape improvements.

- Angel's Island Coffee Shop
- Apollo Animal Hospital



Angel's Island Coffee, located at 7538 Memorial Pkwy SW in south Huntsville, is one of the businesses awarded a Façade Improvement Grant. CONTRIBUTED

- Bubby's Diner
- Das Stahl Bie rhaus
- Earth Touch Garden Center
- Eleanor Murphy Library
- 8200 Memorial Parkway
- Off the Rack Boutique
- Main Street South
- Sabghi's Jewelers
- Village Center

"The Façade Improvement Grants are contributing to a positive business environment in South Huntsville," shared Bekah Schmidt, Executive Director for the South Huntsville Main Business Association. "Through the

grant, we are encouraging the revitalization of buildings and supporting business improvement. We look forward to seeing these projects completed over the next six months, and greatly appreciate our presenting sponsor, Redstone Federal Credit Union for making this all possible."

John Cook, RCFU's Vice President fored to implement "Madison CEO," an initiative for high school seniors to nurture recipients and looks forward to seeing the impact these revitalizations will have on the area. Madison ECO will encourage entrepreneurship as a vehicle for economic development and grant requirements can be found at southhuntsvillemain.org/façade.

'Madison CEO' initiative trains teenagers as entrepreneurs

By GREGG PARKER

Several philanthropic factions have united to implement "Madison CEO," an initiative for high school seniors to nurture recipients and looks forward to seeing the impact these revitalizations will have on the area. Madison ECO will encourage entrepreneurship as a vehicle for economic development and grant requirements can be found at southhuntsvillemain.org/façade.

The catalyst for Madison CEO was Dr. Jason Greene, Dean of Business at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Greene wants economic development to thrive more in Madison County. He was familiar with Midland Institute, the nation's premier company for entrepreneurship.

"Entrepreneurs and business leaders uniting to increase business development in our community is a win-win. Often times, students go to college but never return home. CEO highlights the potential of returning home to start a business and build a career," board member Suzanne Katschke said.

Madison CEO's board was formed in partnership with MCS, UAH, local business leaders and community stakeholders, Katschke said. Other board members are Greene, Salemmah Ahmed, Adherence LLC; Stephanie Bostick, Bob Jones High School; Leigh Christian, Plans to Prosper Consulting; Chakri Deverapalli, UAH; Dr. Heather Donaldson, Madison City Schools; Matt Jones, RocketHatch; Steve Lessman, Signalink; Taron Thorpe, CB&S Bank; and Gina Turner, Madison Hospital.

The program will begin with 20 students and then grow. "This non-traditional experiential learning program will foster hands-on, real-world learning," Katschke said.

"Entrepreneurs and business leaders uniting to increase business development in our community is a win-win."

- Madison CEO board member Suzanne Katschke



"Madison CEO," an entrepreneur development program for high school seniors, places business people as mentors. Teenagers tap the mentors' knowledge and then build their own business skills. CONTRIBUTED

Community Foundation and local companies give \$790K in grants for Giving Tuesday donation

By STAFF REPORTS

Area charities and non-profits received an early Christmas present Dec. 3. In conjunction with "Giving Tuesday", a national celebration that promotes giving back to help others, the Community Foundation of Greater Huntsville announced grants that combined total \$790,000.

Hosted by the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber to celebrate local philanthropy the presentation featured the following companies within the Community Foundation's Corporate Giving Network presenting their grants at the community-wide Giving Tuesday celebration:



Companies in the Community Foundation of Great Huntsville Corporate Giving Network gave 57 grants totaling almost \$800,000. CONTRIBUTED

- ADTRAN
- A-P-T Research
- Boeing
- CADENCE Bank
- Crestwood Medical Center
- ERC, Inc.
- Google Fiber
- IronMountain Solutions
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama
- Vector Wealth Strategies

This collective celebration provided 57 grants totaling \$790,964.00 to local organizations like the Boys and Girls Club, Ability Plus, and The United Way of Madison County. The Foundation's CEO, Melissa Thompson, said the grants are making the greater Huntsville community even better. "We believe that together we can accomplish more than any one individual, company, or organization can accomplish alone."

For more information about the Community Foundation of Greater Huntsville, go to www.communityfoundationhsv.org.



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Area students graduate from Turner School of Construction Management

Program offered in Huntsville for the first time

By STAFF REPORTS

Turner Construction Company recently graduated 17 students from its Turner School of Construction Management (TSCM), a free program for small, disadvantaged, minority-owned, women-owned and veteran-owned businesses.

Initiated in 1969, the program has become an opportunity for firms to improve their economic viability by enhancing their managerial, technical and administrative skills, as well as develop strategic business relationships throughout the industry. Today, the Turner School is offered in more than 30 of Turner's offices nationwide. This is the first time Turner has offered the program in Huntsville.

Throughout the eight-week course, Turner and its partners covered topics including accounting, insurance and bonding; bidding, estimating and procurement; scheduling and field operations; safety and lean processes.

The 2019 Huntsville TSCM graduates are:

- Verrick Green, Project Teamwork & Development
- Brenda J. Perryman, Transit Management Oversight & Solutions, Inc.
- Tamisha Atkins, Atkins Lawn Care
- Ben Freeman, Thomas Electric Inc.
- Leah M. Taylor, Taylor's Victory Garden Center
- Arthur Terrell Vaughn, MMI Inc.
- Jimmy Morris Jr., Morris Builders, LLC
- Fredrika Atkins, Atkins and Goolsby, Inc.
- Angela Dunn, Ultimate Roofing
- Dale Jones, Ultimate Roofing
- John Carroll, International Construction Project Management
- Marsau Scott, Scholt Industries, Inc.
- Deborah Holt, Always Available Services Corp.
- Barbara Gillum, Always Available Services Corp.
- Terrence Rudolph, Trinity Construction Group
- Tamika Randolph, Trinity Construction Group
- Esteban Guadarrama, Alabama A&M student



Graduates are pictured above (top row): Trevon Heath, Verrick Green, Arthur Terrell Vaughn, Ben Freeman, Jimmy Morris Jr., Dale Jones, John Carroll, Stevie Delar, Esteban Guadarrama, Marsau Scott, Terrance Randolph, Bottom Row: Leah Taylor, Tamisha Atkins, Tamika Randolph, Barbara Gillum, Brenda Perryman, Deborah Holt and Angela Dunn. CONTRIBUTED



Turner staff for the school includes Brian Shipp, Trevon Heath, Tyce Hudson, Danielle Barnes, Brendan McCormick, Natoya Sterling; Thomas Locke, Andrew Ariola, Clayton Gibson and Jack Shimer. CONTRIBUTED

Freeman Webb donates \$40,000 to nonprofit organizations from their company-wide "Legendary Leasing" donation drive

By STAFF REPORTS

Freeman Webb Company has donated \$40,000 to three non-profit organizations in honor of the company's 40th anniversary. In their company-wide "Legendary Leasing" donation drive, the company donated \$10 for every new rental application at every Freeman Webb apartment community in order to bolster their support of each community where they have a company presence, including the Huntsville area.

"We are proud to support these worthy causes in partnership with our apartment communities," commented Freeman Webb Co-Founder and Chairman Bill Freeman. "We have always considered our residents to be kind, thoughtful and caring individuals, and this proves it! We are proud to donate these funds as directed by our apartment

communities."

This unique method to raise funds for this community was a partnership between Freeman Webb as a company, their local employees at each apartment community and prospective renters.

"This was a really good project," commented Michell von Oven, the long-time community manager for Madison Landing at Research Park in Madison, Alabama who has been with Freeman Webb for 14 years. "The response was great and encouraging. Prospective renters were surprised that we were donating!"

Jennifer Brown, Madison Landing's leasing professional, agreed. "The drive was extremely successful at our property," she said. "Our prospects really appreciated the fundraiser, which was unique. Due to its unique

See FREEMAN WEBB on page 23



Bill Freeman, Freeman Webb chairman and co-founder and Zac Ward, Freeman Webb's regional manager at Huntsville's Madison Landing at Research Park presents a check to Jordan Turri Andrews, St. Jude Regional Development Director. CONTRIBUTED

Groundbreaking held for fourth Town Madison hotel

By STAFF REPORTS

A groundbreaking ceremony was held for another piece in the Town Madison puzzle on Thursday, Nov. 14.

Business and city leaders gathered with developers of Town Madison to break ground on the new Hilton Garden Inn, on the west end of the development at 145 Graphics Drive.

The \$16 million hotel will have 102 rooms, four floors, with a full-service restaurant and bar. Room service and a fitness center will be available. It is scheduled to open in late 2020.

Hilton Garden Inn has more than 850

properties in 48 countries.

It is being developed by PHD Hotels Inc., which also developed the adjacent Home2Suites.

The Hilton Garden Inn is the fourth hotel announced for Town Madison. Besides the Home2Suites, the avid hotel will also sit close to the Hilton Garden Inn. Margaritaville will be located by Toyota Field and is scheduled to open in 2021.

Madison Chamber of Commerce director Pam Honeycutt was joined at the groundbreaking ceremony by local officials Madison Mayor Paul Finley and Madison County Commission Chairman Dale Strong, along with Town Madison



Madison Mayor Paul Finley, Madison County Commission Chairman Dale Strong, Town Madison developer Louis Breland and PHD Hotels CEO Tom Hunt helped break ground at a Hilton Garden Inn in Town Madison on Thursday, Nov. 14. CONTRIBUTED

developer Louis Breland and PHD Hotels CEO Tom Hunt.

Breland spoke at the groundbreaking about what is to come in Town Madison. "There are many more announcements coming in the very near future," he said.

"This is just the beginning."

Breland spokesperson and developer Joey Ceci said restaurants and small retail businesses will be under construction at Town Madison within the next couple of months.

Catalyst Center receives SBA grant to help small businesses secure government contracts

By GREGG PARKER

This time of year, receiving a gift isn't unusual. Employees of The Catalyst Center for Business & Entrepreneurship have received a gift in the form of a new grant.

Company officials announced on Dec. 4 that the Small Business Administration or SBA had awarded the grant in its network of resource providers. Drake State Community and Technical College, 3421 Meridian Street N. in Huntsville hosted the meeting.

The grant will help to fund efforts with the 7(j) Management & Technical Assistance Program. A network of resource providers, like The Catalyst, will provide high-quality assistance to eligible small disadvantaged businesses.

The 7(j) program's assistance encompasses a wide spectrum of services to include one-on-one customized coaching, business training and networking/matchmaking opportunities.

"A key goal of the program is to help

firms successfully compete for federal, state and local contracting opportunities as a prime contractor or subcontractor," Leigh Christian said. Christian works as TechRich 7(j) Project Manager.

Companies must satisfy a few requirements for eligibility to participate in free training.

* Ownerships — Economically and socially disadvantaged individuals who own a small business qualify participation.

* The rate — A small business can qualify if offices are located in areas of high unemployment or low income.

* Income — Individuals with a low income can qualify for the grant.

* Business pedigree — A small business qualifies that is certified 8(a) participant; is a HUBZone small business; or its status is 'woman-owned small business' that has economic disadvantages.

SBA awarded The Catalyst a one-year grant of \$350,000 for five option years to administer the 7(j) program in Manage-

See CATALYST on page 23



The Catalyst Center for Business & Entrepreneurship's latest grant will help small businesses secure governmental contracts. Discussing the grant are Leigh Christian, from left, TechRich 7(j) Project Manager; Lafero D. Ralph, Deputy Director of Alabama Small Business Administration; and Dr. Patricia Sims, President of Drake State Community and Technical College. CONTRIBUTED

Businesses honored at Madison Chamber of Commerce's Best in Business Awards

By JOHN FEW

Several businesses were honored recently during the Madison Chamber of Commerce's 2019 Best in Business Awards at Insanity Complex. Held, Oct. 22, the awards dinner and presentations was attended by hundreds of North Alabama business professionals and community leaders as they recognized the area's top businesses this year.

The featured speaker of the event was Clayton Hinchman, CEO of Black Patch Distilling Company.

Black Patch Distilling was founded by Hinchman and his father, Gary Cooper. His wife, Leslie, serves as the company's president. A decorated U.S Army veteran turned business owner, Hinchman described the transition he faced after being wounded in combat and losing a leg, to owning a technology company, selling it and then realizing his dream with his father in Black Patch Distillery located on Lanier Drive in Madison.

Hinchman also described the mentality it take to be successful in business and life.

"I will tell you how I define success," he told the crowd. "In the past ten years, I do not wake up to an alarm clock. Every day of my life I wake up excited to go to work, to go to the gym and to be with my family — all the challenges we have to face on a daily basis, I enjoy that. I wake up excited every morning."

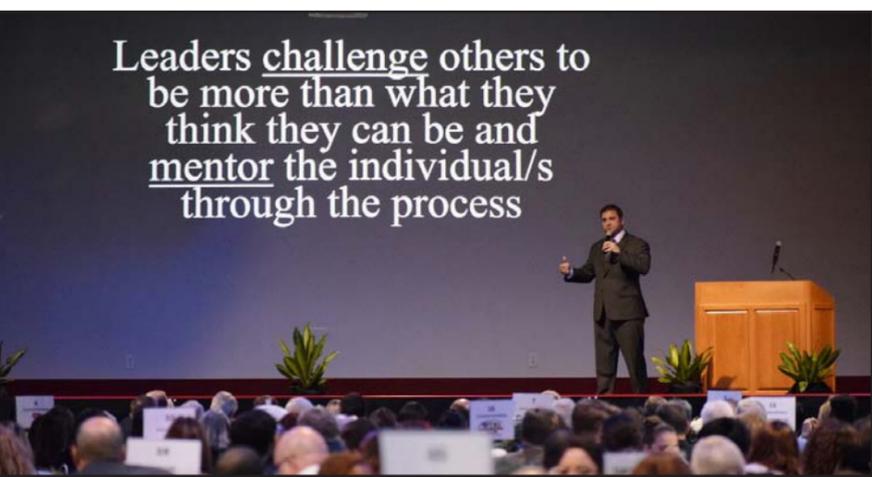
He continued by telling the business professionals at the event if they want to be successful in business and make it they have to focus on taking care of their employees and customer satisfaction. "When you start talking about all the things you are going to buy and all the money you are going to have with all the success you are going to experience, you are going to fail," he said.

The following is a list of this year's win-

- ners in each category:
- Start-up of the Year: Capital Management Services
 - Community Servant of the Year: Daniel Kasambira (Hogan Family YMCA)
 - Health and Wellness Business of the year: Hot Yoga DeLux and Cryotherapy
 - Medical Practice of the Year: Compass Physical Therapy
 - Essential Service Business of the Year: Conditioned Air Solutions
 - Professional Business of the Year: Signalink, Inc.
 - Culinary Business of the Year: The Desert Fork
 - Excellence in Leadership and Service: Janine Nesin – Nesin Therapy Service
 - Arts, Entertainment & Hospitality: iheart-Media
 - Best Non-Profit of the Year: Union Chapel Christian Academy
 - Best Small Business of the Year: Mozaic Audio/Video Integration
 - Best Business of the Year: Signalink, Inc.
 - Ambassador of the Year: Maria Mares with Continental Roofing Company and Buis Cabinet Company

The big honor went to Signalink, Inc, who won the Business of the Year and Professional Business of the Year. "We are so honored to receive the Professional Service Business of the Year and the Best Business of the Year awards," Signalink, Inc said on their Facebook page with the hastag #blessed.

"When strong, successful businesses support the chamber, we can continue to provide the opportunities and resources that up-and-coming businesses need to join your ranks and work together to ensure that Madison continues to thrive and grow amidst all the incredible changes the next few years will bring to our community," said Pam Honeycutt, executive director of the Madison Chamber of Commerce.



The featured speaker for the 2019 Business in Business Awards was Clayton Hinchman, CEO of Black Patch Distilling Company. "I wake up excited every morning," he said as to the reason for his success. RECORD PHOTO/JOHN FEW



Signalink, Inc. won the Best Small Business of the Year. CONTRIBUTED

DR. HUDSON

Continued from page 4

area community. The 2018 total economic impact of Crestwood was approximately \$80 million which included more than \$5 million in local and state taxes paid.

In 2014, Dr. Hudson led the effort to create the Crestwood Women & Families Fund. Managed by the Community Foundation of Greater Huntsville, the fund has to date granted \$125,000 to non-profits in the community who assist women and families with immediate needs.

Dr. Hudson is a graduate of Huntsville High, earned her Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and completed her Family Practice Residency at the School of Primary Medical Care at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Dr. Hudson is a former director of the board of the Birmingham Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and has

served on a number of local non-profit boards such as the Community Foundation of Greater Huntsville, Phoenix Industries, Randolph School, the University of Alabama in Huntsville Foundation, National Children's Advocacy Center, John Stallworth Scholarship Foundation, ALS Association – Alabama Chapter, and Community Free Clinic.

She is also a graduate of Leadership Greater Huntsville Class 13, is a singing member of the Huntsville Community Chorus, and a member of the Madison County Medical Society.

She has two talented daughters, Fran and Emma.

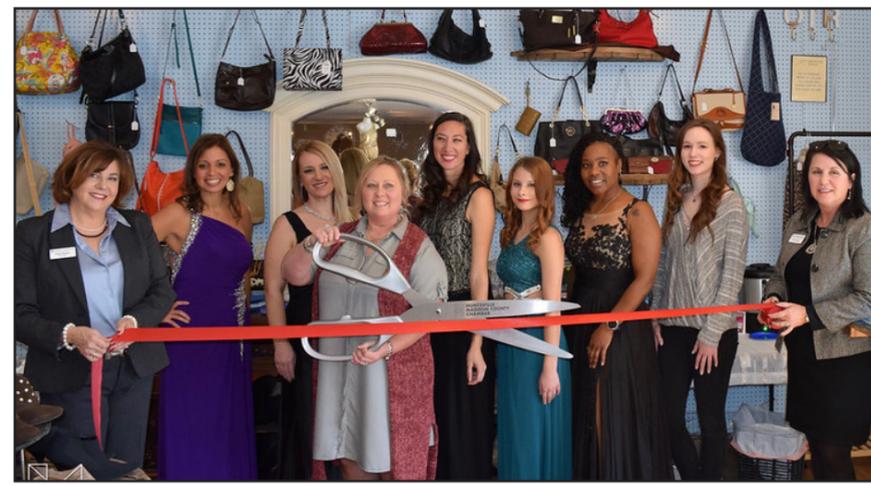
In July, Dr. Hudson was presented a Madison City Coin by Mayor Paul Finley for her efforts in helping to shape the area's healthcare community and contributions to the medical climate of Madison.

Area Business Ribbon Cuttings

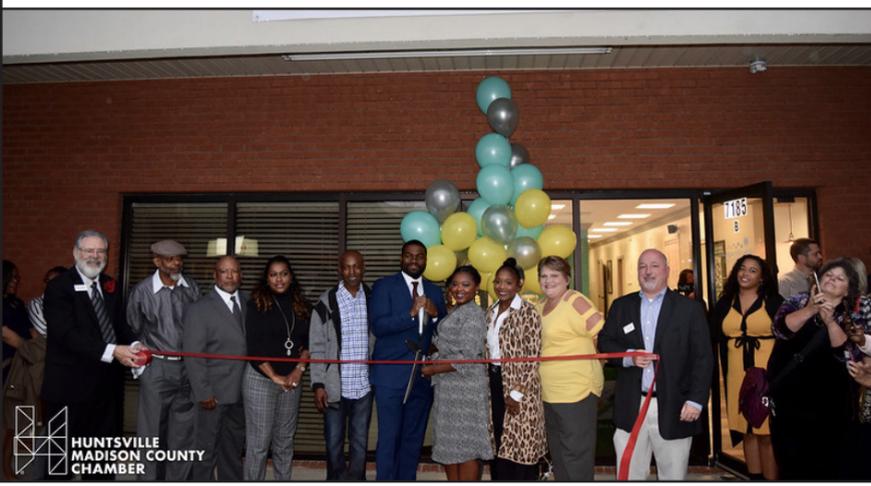
Area business ribbon cutting and grand opening events hosted by the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce and the Madison Chamber of Commerce.



Christmas Charities Year Round • Huntsville



Off the Rack Boutique • Huntsville



Legacy Health Chiropractic • Huntsville



Sierra Nevada Corporation • Huntsville



IERUS Technologies, Inc. • Huntsville



Martinizing Dry Cleaning • Huntsville



Legacy Insurance • Madison



Demetris Curry • The Offices at Spenryn in Madison



FastSigns • Huntsville



Cove Chiropractic, Inc • Huntsville



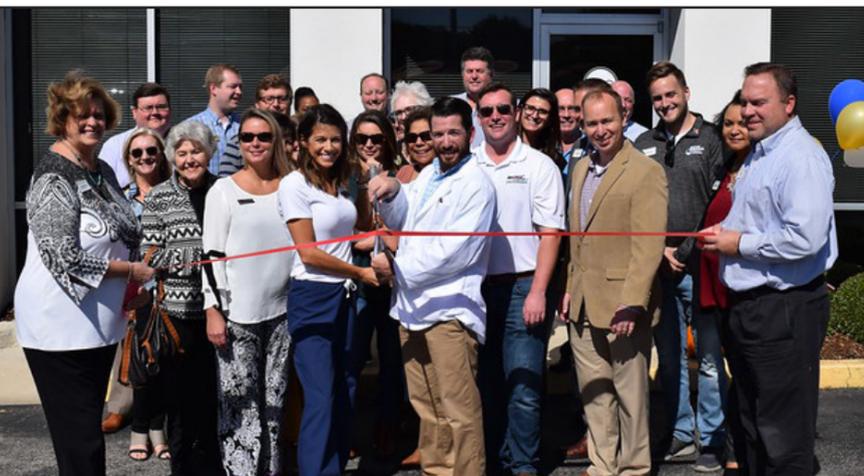
The Offices at Spenryn • One year celebration • Madison



Clarion Pointe • Madison



The Lash Lounge • Huntsville



Chiropractic Health Clinic of Huntsville • Huntsville



RealtySouth Tennessee Valley • Huntsville



PPT Solutions • Huntsville



Hiley Volkswagen of Huntsville Grand Opening • Huntsville



CIS Home Loans & Legacy Capital Advisors • Huntsville



Volunteers David Stewart and Stacy McFall with PPG, Madison Chamber director Pam Honeycutt and Madison Visionary Partners chair Beth Sippel paint benches used for the gazebo, which is pictured in the background. BUSINESS TODAY PHOTO/JOHN FEW

Downtown gazebo gets a face-lift thanks to volunteers, Madison Visionary Partners and PPG

By JOHN FEW

MADISON - The scenic gazebo in downtown Madison is looking better than ever thanks to a team of volunteers, paint manufacturing company PPG, and Madison Visionary Partners. Recently, the gazebo received a fresh coat of paint and some sprucing up in time for the Madison Christmas parade.

"This is one of our first projects and from here we are going to keep plugging away," said Elizabeth Brinton, the executive director for Madison Visionary Partners, a local nonprofit organization. "We work on projects that enhance the quality of life in Madison, and in this one way -- taking our historic district gazebo, putting in some volunteer man hours and some grants from community partners like PPG -- we are able to make the gazebo beautiful for another 20 to 30 years."

Employees from PPG volunteered their time to help paint alongside local citizens to brighten the downtown up for holidays. In fact, the gazebo will be rather bright at night after the volunteers also added decorative Christmas lights.

Volunteers were painting benches and chairs at the gazebo a navy color to match the newly painted trim. Using part of \$5,000 grant from PPG, contractors had already painted the bulk of the gazebo. Volunteers

did the rest and added Christmas decorations and lights. "It's going to be a great place for people to come out during the holidays," said Brinton.

PPG's Colorful Communities program provides volunteers and paint products along with financial contributions to bring color and vitality to communities where the company operates around the world, such as in the Huntsville area, where PPG operates an aerospace transparencies manufacturing facility.

"A lot of PPG employees live here in Madison," Brinton said. "They were telling us about the Colorful Communities Project and I thought that would be perfect for Madison."

PPG representative Dana Chambers said they are hoping to be involved with bigger projects in Madison in the near future. "This is a small project to get us started," she said. "Through the Madison Visionary Partners, we were able to move forward with some projects for the city."

PPG completed a similar community project at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center this past summer.

For more information about Madison Visionary Partners and upcoming projects and volunteer opportunities, look them up on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MVP-Madison or check them out at www.MVP-Madison.org.

INTUITIVE

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"INTUITIVE transformed the engineering services and government contracting industry 20 years ago by creating a superior alternative to the traditional support contractor-offering services that are technically competent, strategically sound, competitively priced, and the overall best value to our customers. Vergenia's dedication to the company, our employees, and our customers is immeasurable and it epitomizes our founding principles. She is doing remarkable things for INTUITIVE, and I look forward to the impact her leadership will have in the future of the company over the next 20 years and beyond."

Shelton received her undergraduate degree in industrial and systems engineering from Auburn University. After working several years in Atlanta, she returned home to Scottsboro and began working full time at INTUITIVE. It was at this time she decided to earn a graduate degree in engineering management at UAH.

As president of INTUITIVE, Shelton is responsible for the daily operation and improvement of all areas within the company. She leads the company's efforts in formulating and implementing the strategic plan. "It is my role as president to lead the organization by creating, communicating, and implementing the company's vision, mission, and overall direction. This includes working closely with executives to new hires and everyone in-between."

Last year, Shelton led efforts for expansion into Florida. The company recently opened a new facility near Eglin Air Force Base in Fort Walton Beach, FL. In July of this year, Shelton and her team opened an office in Camden, Arkansas, which allows the company to improve efficiency, timeliness, and overall costs while working with our customers.

Under Shelton's leadership, INTUITIVE has gained international recognition as the number one Best Medium Workplace in the nation by Great Place to Work® and FORTUNE magazine. "We are so honored to be named the number one Best Medium Workplace in the nation," said Shelton. "This marks our fourth time to be named number one and it's our ninth consecutive year as a national top 10 Great Place to Work."

"This recognition is significant to me because it is based on the satisfaction of our employees. It takes into account how our employees feel about the company," Shelton said. "At INTUITIVE,

we believe in the total well-being of ourfor the most difficult challenges. employees, which is why we strive to im- * Community –Support employee-run prove our workplace and to build an evencharitable organization to benefit under- stronger corporate culture every day. Weserved sectors within Madison County. are always looking for ways to create an Signalink's employee base is generous atmosphere where employees are trulywith charitable causes. In early December, happy and excited about where they workSignalink employees donated \$4,000 to Har- and what they do. Being named the Bestris Home for Children, a private, non-profit Workplace in the nation reinforces that501(c)3 agency licensed for full-time foster our commitment and hard work in build-care of neglected adolescents.

In 2019, Signalink again broadened by investing internal R&D funds to mature the first product line around aviation main- ing and maintaining a positive work en- vironment and strong culture doesn't goinvesting internal R&D funds to mature the first product line around aviation main- tenance and test systems. Currently, their ment positions at the workplace, Sheltonfocus is government contracting and Army, openly embraces her leadership role, asNavy and Air Force customers. Technical well as personal and professional success-services include hardware/software engi- es. "If you look across our organization,neering, logistics, systems integration for you will find that women make up a largeplatform modifications, operations and sus- majority of our management staff," Shel- tainment in configuration management.

ton said. "At INTUITIVE, positions held The company also tests/evaluates avia- by women include President, Senior Vication, missile and ground systems in virtual President, Vice President, Director, Pro-and distributed hardware-in-the-loop and gram Manager, Area Leads, Senior Tech-range-level testing.

As CEO, Alice Lessmann is "the face of Matter Experts, as well as many others.Signalink to the community" and interacts Here, women are recognized for the ex-with business colleagues. "Huntsville and pertise and skills they bring to the positionMadison County have such a deep, virtually they hold," she added.

Shelton offers key strategies for womenshe said. "(I'm) getting the word out about the great things we're all doing here." Her role in civic volunteering is extensive. mire – Find a mentor to help guide youLessmann participates with Women in De- throughout your journey towards leader-fense, Madison Visionary Partners, as 2020 ship. Make sure it's someone you believechair-elect of Women's Business Council in and who shares your same values andand as founding sponsor for Creating Entre- preneurial Opportunities (CEO). She holds

• Raise your hand – It is important tomembership with Women's Economic De- take risks and step outside of your com-velopment Council, Leadership of Greater fort zone. Don't be afraid to raise yourHuntsville, Still Serving Veterans, Heroes hand and ask for new opportunities. on the Water and children's charities.

• Surround yourself with people who At the University of Alabama in Hunts- will push you – Becoming a leader meansville, Lessmann graduated as Acute Care continuously growing, learning, andNurse Practitioner in 2001 and with a bach- evolving. Surround yourself with peo-elor's degree in nursing in 1998. She then ple who push you to be the best you can,graduated as Registered Nurse First Assist who challenge you, and who support yourat Community College of Southern Nevada. She completed study in security manage-

• Believe in Yourself – In order for oth-ment and with Veteran's Institute of Pro- ers to believe in you, you must first be-curement. lieve in yourself. Don't let doubt get the Steve and Alice Lessmann are parents of Leah, 15, who attends Bob Jones High

"I am lucky to work for a company thatSchool and Ben Lessmann, 13, a Discovery supports women in their careers. Howev-Middle School student. In free time, Alice er, I would like to point out that INTU-likes to run, volunteer in town and relax ITIVE operates in a way that sends thewith her family.

message that all employees, regardless of Signalink's address is 1208 Slaughter gender, are encouraged to grow in theirRoad in Madison. For information, call 256- 715-6744, email info@signalink.net or visit signalink.net.

LESSMAN

Continued from page 8

CATALYST

Continued from page 17

ment & Technical Assistance. Strategic Partners for this grant include Drake State Community and Technical College, Neighborhood Concepts, Regions Bank, Redstone Federal Credit Union and Live Oak Bank.

Drake State will provide an Entrepreneurship Certificate program. Neighborhood Concepts and Redstone Federal Credit Union will offer loans with the Business

GRATEFUL

Continued from page 10

er at the school until 2016 when she became an administrator after going back to school herself. "For me to leave the school system, for me to leave my students, it had to be a higher power," Lisa said. "I just felt that God was leading me to a different assignment."

"It wasn't a good bye, it was a see you later. I know I will be tied in with education in some capacity, but I don't know what just yet," she added.

Lisa created a company called Forever Grateful, LLC. "It's named this because I am so grateful that God has put me in a position to do what I am passionate about and where I can be a blessing to people"

It took that faith to embark on such an adventure. "I even signed up for an event that required a food truck in order to participate," she said. The only problem was she didn't have one.

"I signed up for it out of faith," Lisa said. "A week before the event I got a call from a lady that was in the food business as well. She had just found out there was a guy that had started leasing his food trucks out. I leased the truck and had no idea what I was doing, but I did it. From that point on, the doors have just been opening for us. There has been so many opportunities for us to be a blessing to people through our food."

A few months ago, Lisa and Forever Grateful participated in the Taste of Huntsville, an event supporting the Downtown Rescue Mission and Kids to Love. While there, Lisa entered one of her favorite dishes, the chicken, sausage and shrimp gumbo into a contest for the best quick entree' dish. It won first place.

Lisa was born and raised in New Orleans with the creole influence around her, but she says her mother predominately a good country cook. "She is a country girl," Lisa said. "I got the best of both worlds. We would eat Louisiana food, but also a lot of country cooking.

Lisa's aunts and sisters are great New Orleans cooks as well, and she married into a

Assistance Microloan or BAM program.

Live Oak Bank will support 7(j) companies relative to mergers, acquisitions and growth in contract mobilization. Regions will supply facilities, coaches and assist in reaching low- to moderate-income individuals within their North Alabama footprint.

The Catalyst Center serves entrepreneurs and small business owners in every stage

family with great cooks to learn from. "My mother-in-law can cook that ole' creole, Cajun way. She will have different types of pieces of meat and she will season it in a way that I just wanted the gravy off it and some rice - it's so delicious, absolutely phenomenal."

It is that influence that has shaped Lisa's own creations she offers through Forever Grateful. "It's something how within our family we all enjoy cooking with those amazing New Orleans flavors," she said. "It's all New Orleans style, but I got that soul food, country girl bonus."

Lisa posts weekly, and sometimes daily, updates on Facebook where she will be on the food truck. They also provide catering, dinner parties, cooking classes, meal prep and delivery services to those who are looking to bring that distinctive "Nawlins flavor" to their gathering.

Regardless, of whether it's through her services on the food truck, catering or meal preparations, there may be a little surprise waiting.

"You never know what you get because our tag-line is 'Authentic 'Newlins Food and Lagniappe', and that lagniappe is that something extra good that you don't expect," Lisa said. "It may be an extra piece of fish or something, or if God puts it on our heart that the person ordering is having a rough day that day, I get off that truck, pull off my gloves and go out there and hug them. It's whatever God lays on my heart to do."

Lisa is also impacting lives through the people who work with her on her food truck. She has been inviting many of her former students who are now older to work with her. Some may have decided not to go to college and looking for work, or may be looking for something when they are home from college during the breaks.

"If they will call me and let me know I will hire them to work. That has been a

of business. The organization provides best-in-class coaching, in-demand services and relevant programs to foster the success of small businesses.

The Catalyst is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and all contributions are 100-percent tax deductible. The Catalyst's address is 515 Sparkman Drive in Huntsville. For information, call 256-490-8190 or visit catalystcenter.org.

blessing," she said. "They get to spend some time on the truck working and I get to talk to them and listen. I'm still "Momma Grice", but at the same time they respect me enough to where they just pour their hearts out to me. I do believe soon that something will happen to merge my two passions together -- teaching and food.

"I don't know God's whole plan, but what I do know what he has given me is an opportunity to impact more lives and I am going to take and do it to the best of my ability, of course with his help. I am forever grateful," Lisa said.

You can learn more at www.forevergrateful613.com or check out Forever Grateful on Facebook. You can also reach Lisa by calling (256) 274-1491 or emailing forevergrateful613@gmail.com.

FREEMAN WEBB

Continued from page 16

nature, people were more receptive and excited about it!"

Each prospective renter was asked to choose which of three charitable organizations they would like to receive the company's donation. The three selected organizations were St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, The Humane Society of the United States and local initiatives to end homelessness.

Freeman Webb also chose to support local initiatives to end homelessness. As the National Alliance to End Homelessness states, The total amount donated on behalf of the company's anniversary to these charitable organizations includes the following:

- St. Jude Children's Research Hospital--\$18,000
- Humane Society of the United States--\$12,000
- Local Initiatives to End Homelessness--\$10,000

EARN 50x

the National Average Savings Rate*

with a

Brighter Day Savings Account

5.09%

APY

on balances up to \$2,500
and keep earning with 0.50% APY on balances over \$2,500.

Visit a branch or open online.

Must be eligible for membership and open a share savings account in order to join Redstone Federal Credit Union*, open any account, or obtain any product or service. Minimum balance of \$5.00 is required to open and be maintained in the share savings account at all times to join. Fees and other restrictions may apply. Must have online banking user name and PIN/password to open account online. Only one Brighter Day Savings Account is allowed per member. There is no minimum balance required to open the Brighter Day Savings Account. As of December 1, 2019, the annual percentage yield (APY)s for the Brighter Day Savings Account are 5.09% APY and 0.50% APY and are subject to change monthly after the account is opened. There is no minimum balance required to earn the disclosed 5.09% APY, but the maximum balance to earn the 5.09% APY is \$2,500. Any balance beyond \$2,500 will earn 0.50% APY, which is subject to change monthly after the account is opened. The APYs are accurate as of the last dividend declaration date. Fees and other conditions could reduce earnings on the account. Please contact Redstone for current share savings rate information. *The rate for our Brighter Day Savings Account is 50x the national average at 5.09% APY, based on the national average of savings account rates published in the FDIC Weekly National Rates and Rate Caps, accurate as of 12/1/2019.

<https://www.fdic.gov/regulations/resources/rates/>

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