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THE BUSINESS OF FOOD



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Rob Lesley, owner of Romie's, celebrated the third anniversary of his restaurant this year. He'd worked in the food business before owning one, but he said he still had his share of surprises.

DESTE LEE

Restaurant business is 'brutal'

Owners of local eateries warn that it takes more than a good cook to have a successful restaurant.

By **Carlie Kollath**
BUSINESS JOURNAL

The restaurant business isn't for wimps.

According to a three-year study from Ohio State University, 26 percent of restaurants in a surveyed area around Columbus, Ohio, failed in the first year. By the end of the third year, almost 60 percent of the 2,439 restaurants had closed.

The study matched other studies that showed about one in four restaurants close or change ownership within their first year of business.

Running a restaurant is a risky business, but new restaurants pop up every day. The key, successful restaurateurs in Northeast Mississippi say, is remembering that the restaurant is a business.

After celebrating the third anniversary of Romie's Grocery in May, owners Rob and Leeann Lesley count themselves blessed.

"It's a nightmare that we love," said Leeann, taking a minute to sit with Rob and plan food orders with one of the restaurant's suppliers.

Romie's started with lunch and Rob's catering business, which he had before the Lesleys bought the restaurant. In February 2007, the Lesleys added dinner. In May, they expanded again with an outdoor patio. And, Rob since has expanded his catering business with a 33-foot trailer to cater events for 2,500 people.

Leeann joked that when everything was getting started, she wanted the Idiot's Guide to opening a restaurant. The Lesleys said Romie's benefited from Rob's experience with virtually every position in a restaurant – dishwasher, janitor, bartender, cook, bouncer – but he didn't have any formal restaurant training.

"I went to the school of hard knocks," he said smiling. "When you are opening (a restaurant),

Find out more

- Interested in more information about the business side of owning a restaurant? The National Restaurant Association's Web site (www.restaurant.org) is a good resource.
- Check out the Mississippi Hospitality and Restaurant Association's site (www.msra.org) for additional tips.

you need to mop the floor and do it all."

It's a reality the Lesleys said is a major culprit for failure of restaurants.

"You see a lot of people go into business because they can cook at home," Rob said.

Leeann added, "The business of the restaurant is entirely different."

Location, location

Denise Backstrom, a popular caterer in Lee County, opened

Turn to **BRUTAL** on Page 22F

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Food business is big business

We spend a lot on food. And "food" includes trips to the grocery store, restaurants, roadside stands and the vending machine with that 75-cent bag of M&Ms calling your name.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which gathers information on just about everything you wanted to know (and perhaps didn't want to know), the average yearly expenditure per consumer unit – which is similar to a household – spent \$6,111 on food in 2006.

We don't know the numbers for 2007 yet.

The BLS says each consumer unit/household is comprised of 2.5 persons, 1.9 vehicles and a white picket fence. OK, just kidding about that last one.

Anyway, of that \$6,111 we spent on food, about 54 percent – or \$3,417 – was spent at home. The rest – \$2,694 – was spent away from home.

Food costs were No. 3 in household expenditures. Tops

on the list was housing, at \$16,366, followed by transportation at \$8,508.

So, we spend more than 13 percent of our budgets on food. And more than 40 percent of that, by the way, is spent in restaurants.

Breaking down our food spending further, the average American household spent about 7.7 percent of its income at home, 5.6 percent eating out and 1.1 percent on alcoholic beverages.

And the less money you made, the bigger chunk of your budget went toward food.

For the richest 20 percent, about 11.5 percent of its total spending went toward food. For



**Dennis
SEID**

the middle 20 percent, it's 14.5 percent. The poorest 20 percent spent about 16.6 percent of their total spending on food.

According to Forbes magazine, the top fifth of earners spent about 6 percent of its budgets on groceries for the house, compared to 9 percent for the middle fifth and 12 percent for the bottom fifth.

Again, the more you make, the less you spend on food.

Big, big business

Here are more interesting numbers for you to digest (pun intended):

■ According to Plunkett Research, total food sales in the U.S. were nearly \$1.2 trillion last year.

■ The U.S. Census Bureau said supermarket and store food sales, not counting alcoholic beverages, were nearly \$507 billion last year. Walmart Supercenters accounted for about 20 percent of that.

■ The National Restaurant Association said restaurant food

sales were about \$537 billion last year.

■ Non-traditional food store sales – which include wholesale clubs, dollar store, drug and military stores – were about \$120 billion.

But wait, there's more!

All that spending is done at more than 40,000 grocery stores, 146,000 convenience stores and 945,000 restaurant and food service locations.

We also ate about 119 pounds of red meat per year, per person and nearly 105 pounds of poultry per year, per person. By the way, we averaged only about 16.3 pounds of fish and shellfish.

So what do all these facts and figures mean? It's up to you to decide.

For me, it means I feel fortunate to live in the land of plenty.

Even if it is getting more expensive every day.

Bon appetite!

Dennis Seid is editor of the Northeast Mississippi Business Journal. Contact him at (662) 678-1578 or at dennis.seid@journal.com.

On the COVER

■ **Two all beef patties, special sauce, cheese ... and lots of green. The food industry is comprised of many components that you might not have thought about before, and this month's Business Journal introduces you to some of those businesses in Northeast Mississippi. All on a sesame bun.**

Photo
illustration by
C. Todd Sherman

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One-stop shop still going strong

■ **Ken Jeter Equipment Co. has been in business for 37 years.**

By **Dennis Seid**
BUSINESS JOURNAL

TUPELO – If you've opened a restaurant, convenience store or supermarket, then you've probably heard of Ken Jeter Equipment Co.

Owner and president Ken Jeter and his staff have been selling and servicing equipment and supplies to those businesses for nearly four decades.

Step into the company's location on Cliff Gookin Boulevard, and just about everything needed for a store, restaurant or food service operation can be found, including cutlery, coffee pots, pitchers, pots, pans, fryers, popcorn makers, hot dog warmers, rice cookers, French fry cutters, freezers, icemakers and silverware.

"If we don't have it, we can get it," Jeter said.

And businesses in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee have been calling on Jeter to fill their wish lists. From large supermarkets to small mom-and-pop stores and everything in between, Jeter has dealt with all of them.

But Jeter's career, like many other entrepreneurs', began elsewhere.

"I started out in the military and went to refrigeration school and then got an engineering degree," he said.

From there, he went to work for Malone & Hyde Wholesale, then went into business for himself.

"When I got into the business, it was primarily supermarket equipment," Jeter said.

Refrigeration equipment was needed for the fruits, vegetables, dairy products, meats and frozen food, and Jeter was called on early and often.

There were few fast food restaurants in the early days of Jeter's business, and full-service convenience stores were just an idea.

But as those businesses grew, Jeter learned to adapt and grow with them. The company became more than a place to buy equipment, it also developed into a one-stop shop of sorts.

"We actually design and lay out supermarkets, c-stores and restaurants," he said. "We'll do the blue prints and handle the electrical work and plumbing, too. We'll deliver, install it and service it."

"We've got jobs all over the country ... I never thought it would last this long," he said with a laugh. "So far, we've been real blessed."

The emergence of Wal-Mart has been a challenge of sorts for Ken Jeter Equipment.



THOMAS WELLS

Ken Jeter has adapted to many industry changes in the 37 years he's been in business.

"Wal-Mart is putting an end to independent supermarkets and other small chains," Jeter said. "They have really changed the retail market."

Jeter has worked with the giant retailer in the past, but prefers working with smaller clients.

"I like the fast, little jobs," he said.

Restaurants and small stores are always opening, no matter what the economy is doing. And of course, servicing equipment keeps Jeter and his company busy, too.

"We also have a lot of homeowners

who buy from us, too," he added. "We have a lot of restaurant-quality pots and pans and other equipment, and they come see us."

As for the future, Jeter has no immediate plans to retire, only that he'd like to eventually.

"When I was down here (on Cliff Gookin) in the fall of 1978, it was mainly agricultural, and maybe a few factories," he said. "Now look at how much we've grown, and with Toyota on the way, I think the next few years will be very good."

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Experience, variety key for the upsell

■ Tastings, demonstrations and variety are key in specialty food stores, owners say.

By Carlie Kollath
BUSINESS JOURNAL

TUPELO – Ladles and tongs and basters. Oh my!

In the world of specialty food stores, it's all about variety.

Jody Lehman, owner of A Cook's Place in Tupelo, has about 2,000 SKUs in her store that are made for cooking or entertaining.

She has shelves of olive oils and vinegars from all over the world. There's another display with more than 10 different types of salt and pepper.

Keep exploring and you'll find a tomato peeler, ballerina cookie cutters and an egg poacher. Wander past the flat screen television tuned to the Food Network and you'll find pots and pans, cutting boards, aprons, cutlery, teapots, upscale dish soap, silicon oven mitts and sushi sets.

"We have everything just about," Lehman said as her staff counted whip cream chargers for a customer's order.

Culin-Arts in West Point is chockfull of items for cooking enthusiasts as well, said owner Valda Carmichael, adding that her merchandise also attracts "people who love pretty things."

Turn to **COOK'S** on Page 21



DESTE LEE

Jody Lehman, owner of A Cook's Place, said she has to emphasize customer interaction in her store to drive sales. She constantly has tastings and samplings. She also has representatives from the manufacturers in throughout the year to talk about their products. In addition, she had cooking classes using products and tools from her store.

TO-GO VENDOR CATERS TO BUSY LIFESTYLE

By Carlie Kollath
BUSINESS JOURNAL

OXFORD – Provisions owner Beth Vickers markets her store as a gourmet-to-go venue.

Sure, it's a specialty food store, but she said the majority of her sales come from the fridge and freezer.

Her store, which opened in the Oxford Marketplace shopping center in January 2007, sells premade entrees, side dishes, breakfasts, desserts, dips and pates that are refrigerated or frozen. Items come in three sizes, with the smallest made for two people. And, there are cooking and reheating instructions on each container.

Vickers said the gourmet-to-go idea came to her during culinary school when they were discussing food trends. It also fits in with her lifestyle.

"Me personally, it seems my schedule has gotten a lot busier," she said. "And I know in the back of my mind that fast food isn't good for me."

She said she thinks her customers are in the same situation. "They want to sit down with some semblance of a family meal, but they don't want to sit down over a pizza or a burger," she said. "People know what good food is supposed to taste like. We're becoming a little more sophisticated. People are more discriminating in their tastes."

Her most popular items are shrimp and grits, shrimp and artichoke, poppyseed chicken, creamy baked spaghetti, andouille sausage and chicken gumbo and old-fashioned macaroni and cheese.

"Oddly enough it's the healthier ones" that don't sell, she said.

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MEET the MEAT people

■ **Mar-Dan has been in the wholesale delivery business since 1980.**

By Dennis Seid
BUSINESS JOURNAL

GUNTOWN – Nearly 30 years ago, Freddie White had a great idea to get into the meat distribution business.

His friends and colleagues didn't think too much of the idea.

"It was back in 1980 and interest rates were at 23 percent," White said. "They thought I was crazy, opening a business with no business and a 23 percent interest rate. They didn't think I'd survive. But I thought we could, and we did."

Indeed, the company, which was originally called FW Meats, was incorporated as Mar-Dan a few years later.

The name comes from a combination of Freddie and Mildred White's children – Mark, Dana, Marla and Anna.

"That's where we came up with the name," Freddie said.

On the delivery trucks bearing the company's name is the phrase "the meat people." But Mar-Dan is more than that these days.

"We started delivering only meat products – fresh lines of beef and pork and all kinds of processed meats," White said. "As time went along, we added other product lines like fish, poultry, frozen foods and some dry products like pies and cakes. We offer a wide variety."

Mar-Dan has customers as far south as Jackson, with Northeast Mississippi serving as its primary market. The company also reaches parts of southern Tennessee and western Alabama as well.

Mar-Dan buys in volume from food processors and other companies at the lowest possible price, then passing those savings along to its customers.

Big retail operations like Wal-Mart and Kroger have their own distribution systems. So, Mar-Dan's cus-

tomers are primarily independent grocers and convenient stores, along with a few restaurants and other assorted businesses.

"We're not the only company that does this, and I don't think one company has a monopoly in any one area," White said. "You can't depend 100 percent on one supplier anyway."

Steady growth

It's been a slow and steady rise for the company that started as a one-man operation back when Ronald Reagan was president.

"It started with me, then it became a two-man operation – which was my son and I," White said. "Then six months later it was a four-man operation."

Today, the company has 18 employees, who work in a facility in Guntown that has expanded five times since 1985.

But don't ask White how big the building is.

"I honestly don't know, but it's big," he said with a laugh. And about 80 percent of the facility is refrigerated, of course.

The electricity bills are high, White said, but nothing compared to the fuel bill.

"But we've managed to handle it so far," he said. "It's not easy."

Having been through a handful of recessions and economic slowdowns already, White said the company will make it through this round as well.

"We've been blessed, that's for sure," White said. "We have to give thanks to the Lord for all that's happened."

"We've been through ups and downs, the main thing is that our goal has always been to service our customers to the best of our ability and to give them what they want and how they want it. This company isn't about me – it's about all of us. No one person is more important than the other. Everything and every one is equally important."

Gadgets & GEAR

The tech tools professionals rely on and the ones they wish they could depend on.

'QUEEN OF KITCHEN GADGETS'

- **Who:** Denise Backstrom
- **Occupation:** Owner of Denise B Catering
- **Where:** South of Tupelo in Lee County

Denise Backstrom is the self-proclaimed Queen of Kitchen Gadgets. She has five drawers of gadgets in her kitchen, where she operates her business. And, she adds, that count doesn't include her measuring equipment or the other miscellaneous gadgets, such as potato ricers, stored elsewhere.

"I'm a low-tech person," she said. "My gadgets are not necessarily high tech. To me in catering, it's whatever gets the job done. Some make it look pretty, like the mushroom slicer, and others will get the job done in a hurry, like the lemon squeezer ... When you find a good one, it's really invaluable because it's really helpful."

The gadgets are important to Backstrom's business, she said, because when she is preparing a lot of food for sale, "the time and the visual consistency are important."

She's constantly on the prowl for gadgets that will make her life easier, but she has high standards.

"Because I cook a lot and cater a lot, my equipment gets beat up so I don't go for cutesy stuff. I need my stuff to have some heft to it."

And, she said she always finds something new to buy.

"Whoever is out there inventing things is pretty good. You just never know you needed it before they market it and you go, "Oh my god. I need that."

- *Carlie Kollath, Business Journal*

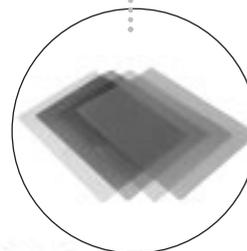


C. TODD SHERMAN

Denise Backstrom, a caterer, relies on her gadgets to help her save time and ensure consistency.

Wish list

- "A good automatic knife sharpener that's reliable."
- "A dishwasher that I could pull out the drawers and it would convert into a ware washer." A ware washer is a commercial-style dishwasher that cuts down on labor and time.
- "A double convection oven with a warming drawer"
- A salamander - "It's just a really cool thing. It'll brown a plate really fast."

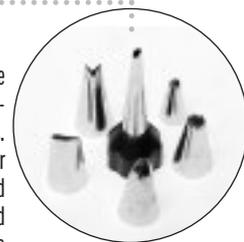


FLEXIBLE CUTTING MATS: "The mats are movable if I have help here. You can fold them up. They are really, really sanitary. You can put them in the dishwasher. I'm on my second or third batch."

Must Haves



MUSHROOM SLICER: "You can use the mushroom slicer for anything you need to cut into uniform slices. I use it for strawberries. It processes strawberries much, much quicker than by hand."



DECORATING TIPS: "These are usually used for cake decorating but I don't make cakes. I normally use a plastic bag or a pastry bag and the tips and take pesto cream cheese and fill tomatoes. And you can do deviled eggs with the tips and it looks pretty."



LEMON SQUEEZER: "This will squeeze a lot of lemon juice in a hurry. There's a separate lime squeezer, but you can put limes in the lemon squeezer."



SALAD SPINNER: "I was all greens. I don't care if it says it's prewashed. A salad spinner is one of those things that does what it says it's going to do - it washes and dries it. I hate wet greens."

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NeMiss Prius to supplement rising demand

■ Toyota Mississippi's Blue Springs plant will help supply the North American market.

By Dennis Seid
BUSINESS JOURNAL

In January, Toyota will roll out the next-generation Prius, the same vehicle that will be made in Mississippi in the fall of the following year.

But production of the world's most popular hybrid vehicle also will continue in Japan. The Japanese automaker announced last month a first-ever major restructuring of its manufacturing operations in North America.

As part of that restructuring, the Mississippi plant will produce the Prius rather than the Highlander, as originally planned.

"The plant in Blue Springs will build Prius for the North American market," said Toyota Motor Manufacturing

Mississippi spokeswoman Lacy Lockett. "It's Toyota's philosophy to build in the markets in which it sells."

And Toyota spokesman Mike Goss confirmed that Prius production here won't replace production in Japan. Rather, it will complement it. Last year, Toyota produced 280,000 Prius.

"There's plenty of worldwide demand for them, as you know," he said.

Since hitting the market in 1997, more than 1 million Prius have been sold.

But Toyota is struggling to meet demand for the gas-electric hybrid because suppliers are unable to supply enough of the batteries and motors.

When the Blue Springs plant does open in late 2010, it will be the first plant outside of Japan or China to produce the Prius.

While production figures haven't been finalized, some industry analysts say

TMMMS could build 120,000-150,000 Prius initially.

Last year, Toyota sold about 180,000 Prius in North America.

The company said in March it was boosting production by a third, to 450,000 by late next year.

Given that gas prices are hovering around \$4 and more, demand for fuel-efficient vehicles like hybrids is steadily growing.

Offering more hybrids

Toyota, which last year was on the verge of toppling GM as the world's largest automobile company, hopes to increase its market share by expanding its hybrid offerings.

At the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in January, Toyota President Katsuaki Watanabe said the company hoped to sell 1 million hybrids a year by the end of the decade. He also

vowed to make hybrids available to the company's entire lineup of vehicles by 2020.

"Hybrid technology is versatile and can be applied to all those powertrains," he said.

In the meantime, Toyota is busy revamping its plans in North America, where automobile sales have sagged for almost every manufacturer.

Bowing to economic pressures that have seen sales of trucks and SUVs plummet, Toyota, like its other automotive brethren, said it was revamping its production to meet shifting demand.

The move affects four of its facilities in North America.

Toyota's plant in Princeton, Ind., will next spring shift its production of the Tundra pickup to San Antonio, which was opened in 2006 to build the Tundra exclusively. Princeton also produces the Sequoia SUV and Sienna minivan.

The Highlander SUV will

be made in Princeton instead of Blue Springs.

Production of the Tundra will be suspended from Aug. 8 to early November, which also means Toyota's engine plant in Huntsville will have to suspend operations.

The change for the Blue Springs plant also could affect suppliers. Six companies have said they were going to supply TMMMS with parts for the Highlander, but it's not clear if all will be able to do so for the Prius.

At least one company, Toyota Boshoku, said it doesn't anticipate any problems since it already supplies seats for the Prius in Japan.

Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour said he doesn't think there will be a problem.

"All of the companies that have come here but one are part of the Toyota family of companies," he said, "and we believe all of them will be in business to supply the Blue Springs plant."

Noting that high gas prices have dampened demand for larger trucks and SUVs, he said building the Prius instead of the Highlander was a "home run."

"As a crossover SUV, I didn't see the Highlander as particularly vulnerable in the market - it's a great product," Barbour said. "On the other hand, the Prius is a grand slam home run."

"We got picked for the most sought-after economic development project last year because it involved the premier automaker in the world," he continued. "Now, we're getting the premier vehicle of the premier automaker ... that can't help but be a positive influence."

The state's mission hasn't changed in its pursuit of suppliers, Barbour added, although the type of suppliers obviously is different.

"The effect is small, but real," he said. "We're going to have to have suppliers who would not have been recruited before - batteries, drive-trains, engines - all of which are made for the Prius in Japan right now."

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BRIEFING

LEE COUNTY

General Atomics starts power train testing

■ TUPELO - General Atomics has begun long-term reliability testing of the full-scale power train of the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, or EMALS, in its new 5,000-square-foot high-cycle test facility at its Tupelo assembly plant. The purpose of this work is to more thoroughly test the EMALS system intended for installation on the next generation of U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, designated CVN-78.

Renasant posts 2Q earnings of \$7.9M

■ TUPELO - Renasant Corp. said that its second-quarter net earnings rose 12.7 percent to more than \$7.9 million, thanks to higher net interest income and noninterest income.

The bank posted basic earnings per share of 38 cents for the period, compared to 42 cents for the second quarter of 2007. The drop was partially attributed to the shares of Renasant common stock issued in connection with the Capital Bancorp acquisition, which was completed on July 1, 2007, and the related equity offering during the second quarter last year.

Total assets as of June 30, 2008, were \$3.78 billion, a 35.5 percent increase from the same period a year ago.

Total deposits were nearly \$2.47 billion, an 11

percent increase. The Capital Bancorp merged added nearly \$615 million in assets, \$516 million in loans and \$490 million in deposits that were not reflected in the second quarter 2007 financial statements.

While net interest income grew to \$27.5 million from \$21.5 million, net interest margin dropped to 3.43 percent from 3.66 percent.

Noninterest income increased 7.2 percent to \$13.8 million.

BancorpSouth nets 2Q income of \$40.1 million

■ TUPELO - BancorpSouth Inc. said that its second-quarter net earnings grew nearly 12 percent to \$40.1 million, propelled by loan growth and noninterest revenue.

The financial holding company reported basic earnings per share of 49 cents for the period, compared to \$35.9 million, or 44 cents for the second quarter of 2007.

Noninterest revenue grew 22 percent to \$73.3 million

Net interest revenue rose 3 percent to \$109.8 million.

Net interest margin for the second quarter remained unchanged from the first quarter, at 3.79 percent. For the second quarter of 2007, net interest margin was 3.69 percent.

Total assets rose 1.4 percent to \$13.4 billion. Total deposits fell 6 percent to \$9.8 billion. Loans and leases, net of unearned income, increased 5.7 percent to \$9.5 billion.

MONROE COUNTY

Walgreens closing in on new location

■ AMORY - A new, full-size Walgreens pharmacy could be coming to Amory soon.

The store would be at the intersection of Highway 278 and Earl Frye Boulevard, where a Cadence Bank branch is currently located.

At a recent meeting of the mayor and board of aldermen, Shelby Murray, a civil project engineer with Pickering Inc., appeared before the board on behalf of Walgreens. He asked the city to apply for permits with the Mississippi Department of Transportation for the store to have an entry on Highway 278.

Murray said the retailer will have a three-laned entrance and exit and the alleyway behind the site will be widened to the east and paved at Walgreens' expense. The city would maintain use of the alleyway once the store is open.

The city approved Murray's request and applications will be made for the entry permits on the state highway.

Walgreens owns and operates a small drug store on Earl Frye Boulevard that had operated as Family Meds.

Gas storage facility set for Monroe

■ AMORY - A portion of the natural gas that fuels the nation's homes and businesses soon will

be stored in a depleted underground gas reservoir in Monroe County and piped to customers.

A barbecue and groundbreaking ceremonies were held last month in Amory for Monroe Gas Storage Co. LLC, a company that was formed through the partnership of Foothills Energy Ventures LLC, a Colorado-based company begun in 2006, and High Sierra Energy LP, also of Denver.

According to Kevin Legg of Foothills Energy Ventures, the gas field being developed in Monroe County is located at the former Four Mile Creek Field, located off Phillips Schoolhouse Road northeast of the Amory city limits. The project will be about a \$170 million investment, including pipeline, facilities and pad gas.

Seven to 10 jobs will be created when the company is in full operation around April 2009 with a total payroll of about \$550,000 annually, excluding benefits.

ALCORN COUNTY

Air Evac Lifeteam gets CAMTS accreditation

■ CORINTH - Air Evac Lifeteam, which operates a base in Corinth, has received accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Services.

The accreditation represents the highest standard for medical transport services. As part of the accreditation process, Air Evac Lifeteam voluntarily undertook the largest scale inspection and accreditation process in CAMTS' history and is now the largest medical transport program under one

name to achieve this accreditation in the world. All 69 Air Evac Lifeteam bases opened prior to May of 2008 are now accredited.

PONTOTOC COUNTY

Derrington named Chamber leader

■ PONTOTOC - Pontotoc native Cecilia B. Derrington has been named executive director of the Pontotoc County Chamber of Commerce. She will begin her new post on Aug. 4.

Since 2006, Derrington has been manager of industrial and community relations at Peavey Electronics Corp. in Meridian, where she was involved with economic development, marketing, public relations, project management and consulting.

Before joining Peavey, Derrington was tourism director for Meridian/Lauderdale County. Her responsibilities there included coordination of marketing programs, advertising and promotion of tourism venues for the city and county.

Derrington grew up in Pontotoc and was an honor graduate of Pontotoc High School. She earned a bachelor's degree and a Master in Business Administration from Mississippi College.

Daily Journal, Monroe Journal, wire reports



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Chamber Connection

A publication of Journal Publishing and the CDF Chamber Division – August 1, 2008

Martin Honored as MEDC Lifetime Member

Mr. Harry A. Martin, Community Development Foundation President Emeritus, was recognized as an honorary lifetime member of the Mississippi Economic Development Council (MEDC) at their summer conference in Biloxi.

"It is a true honor to be recognized in such a way by my peers in the economic development community. Our entire family is very grateful for the recognition," said Martin.

Martin served as President and CEO of the Community Development Foundation from 1956 to 2001. Under Martin's 44 years of leadership, more than 100 industrial plants located or expanded in Tupelo/Lee County, and five industrial parks were developed. Site Selection Handbook and the Industrial Development Research Council of Atlanta named CDF as one of the top 10 development agencies in the nation in 1987, 1993, and 1997, during Martin's tenure. Also, the Tupelo Lee Industrial Park South was listed as one of the top 10 industrial parks in the nation for new space - the only one in the Mid-South - in 1991.

"This is a very deserving honor for the man that helped grow and mold the Community Development Foundation for over 43 years into what it is today," said David Rumbarger, CDF President/CEO and Martin's successor.

"Tupelo/Lee County is one of the top manufacturing areas in the state in large part because of Mr. Martin's work and leadership and we honor him for that."

The Mississippi Economic Development Council serves as the voice for Mississippi's economic/community development and chamber of commerce professionals and their constituencies. Through collaboration with other local, state, and national entities, MEDC establishes and advocates Mississippi's economic and community development agenda.



Pictured at the award ceremony are David Rumbarger, CDF; Supervisor Bobby Smith; Harry A. Martin; and Barbara Smith, CDF.

At left, Harry A. Martin, recipient of the Lifetime Member honor by MEDC is pictured with MEDC Executive Director Carol Hardwick and MEDC President George Freeland.



Chamber focus

Dear Friends:

Congratulations again to Harry Martin for his distinct honor last week of receiving an Honorary Life Membership in Mississippi Economic Development Council.

During his 44 years of service to CDF, he received numerous citations for his exceptional achievements in economic and community development. This is a most deserving honor for Mr. Martin and CDF congratulates him on this signal honor.

CDF is turning 60 this year. We were chartered in September 1948 and have several events and activities planned for our year-long "60 Years of Service" Celebration. One activity we are working on now is building a home for a special family with Habitat for Humanity. The new home will be dedicated in September as a part of our year-long events. If you are interested in donating your time and talent in building this home, please contact Jennie Bradford Curlee at 662.842.4521 or e-mail jcurlee@cdfms.org. Watch for news from CDF on the other



SMITH

events planned. CDF is proud to be a member of the Japan America Society of Mississippi. The mission of the Society is to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas and information between the people of Japan and Mississippi businesses, government, schools and communities. Several events are being planned for our area and will be announced later in the year. In the meantime, if you would like to be a member of the Japan America Society of Mississippi, or for more information, visit www.jasmis-us.com

After a summer hiatus, the First Friday programs are back on schedule. Look forward to seeing you at First Friday on September 5.

Vice President of Chamber Services

Community Development Foundation's Board of Directors for 2008-2009

CDF is governed by a 61-member Board of Directors. The Executive Committee is composed of the CDF Officers and eleven additional members of the Board. CDF's goals and objectives are accomplished through the efforts of members appointed to committees operating under one of CDF's three divisions: Chamber Division, Economic Development Division, and Planning and Property Management Division.

2008-2009 Executive Committee

Mitch Waycaster, Chairman
Jim Fitzgerald, First Vice Chairman
Chris Rogers, Second Vice Chairman
David Rumbarger, President/Secretary
Jack Reed, Jr., Past Chairman

Tillmon Calvert
Billy Crews
Chauncey Godwin
Lisa Hawkins
Shane Hooper

David Irwin
Guy Mitchell, III
Mary Pace
Tom Robinson
Jeff Snyder

2008-2009 Board of Directors

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David Brevard
Mark Burselon
Gary Carnathan
Mike Clayborne
V.M. Cleveland
Scott Cochran
David Cole
David Copenhaver
Ormella Cummings
Byron Fellows
Tom Foy
Lloyd Gray
Rubye Del Harden
John Heer

David Henson
Dick Hill
Tommie Lee Ivy
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Zell Long
John Lovorn
Randy McCoy
Robin McGraw
Hughes Milam
Buzzy Mize
Chuck Moffatt
Mabel Murphree
Ed Neelly
Alan Nunnelee
Larry Otis

Greg Pirkle
Scott Reed
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Cathy Robertson
Mike Scott
Bobby Smith
Terry Smith
Jane Spain
Kyle Steward
Lee Tucker
Patty Tucker
Mary Werner
Tim Weston
Markel Whittington

New CDF MEMBERS

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Ms. Karla Strickland
P.O. Box 336
Saltillo, MS 38866
(662) 869-3515
Employment Agencies

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Mr. Butch Palmer
P.O. Box 1728
Tupelo, MS 38802
(662) 315-2970
Insurance

ALUMNI PROPERTIES, LLC
Ms. Heather Spaeth
100 Grove Hill Dr.
Oxford, MS 38655
(662) 801-4094
Real Estate/Appraisers/Property Development

CRITERIUM-PITTMAN ENGINEERS
Mr. Gerald Pittman
304 S Spring St., Ste. C
Tupelo, MS 38804-4853
(662) 841-5700
Engineering

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1009 President Ave.
Tupelo, MS 38801
(662) 680-9199
Photography and Framing

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Mr. Josh Smith
3117 McCullough Blvd.
Belden, MS 38826
(662) 840-6872
Restaurants and Catering

RED BUD SUPPLY, INC.
Mr. David Chumbley
P.O. Box 533
Belmont, MS 38827
(662) 454-3057
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SIMON ROOFING AND SHEET METAL CORP.
Mr. Robert Fusco
70 Karago Ave.
Youngstown, OH 44512
(901) 301-4008
Contractors/Construction/Building Materials

13 14
Dates to remember

AMBASSADORS QUARTERLY MEETING

Thursday, August 7
4:00 p.m.
CDF Boardroom

FIRST STEPS WORKSHOP

Tuesday, August 12
6:30 p.m.
Renasant Center for IDEAs

"INVENTOR'S GUIDE: HOW TO PROTECT YOUR IDEA"

From IDEA to Invention to Patent
Thursday, August 14
12:00 noon
CDF Boardroom
(Deadline to register is Wednesday, August 13 at 12:00 noon. Call 1(800) 725-7532)

FIRST STEPS WORKSHOP

Tuesday, August 26
1:00 p.m.
Renasant Center for IDEAs

FIRST FRIDAY

Friday, September 5
7:00 a.m.
Mall at Barnes Crossing Food Court

SNAP FITNESS OF TUPELO



A ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the grand opening of Snap Fitness in Tupelo. Pictured on the front row are: Paul Mize, BancorpSouth; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Emily Addison, CDF; Bea Luckett, J. Guyton Group Realty; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; Thomas Cain, Snap Fitness-Tupelo; Councilman Mike Bryan; Kelly Anderson, Snap Fitness; Margie Anderson, Snap Fitness; Tina Anderson, Snap Fitness; Waurene Heflin, Crye-Leike Realtors. Pictured on the back row are: Tina Powell, BancorpSouth; Marsha Williams, Williams Transfer & Storage; Sue Golmon, Coldwell Banker Tommy Morgan, Inc.; Lauren Barber, Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal; Michelle Crowe, Regions Bank; Carey Snyder, WTVA/WLOV/WKDH; Jean Mooneyhan, Mississippi Radio Group; Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Ann Brazil, Snelling Staffing; Jim Leeper, Southern Diversified Industries; Jan Pannell, Sprint Print; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Benjamin Hill, Renasant Bank; Michael Addison, Go Box; and Brandon Holloway, M&F Bank. Snap Fitness-Tupelo is located at 549 Coley Road in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.844.7627.

DECO DIRECT



A ribbon cutting was held at Deco Direct in Tupelo. Pictured on the front row are: Benjamin Hill, Renasant Bank; Richard Carleton, Mall at Barnes Crossing; Emily Addison, CDF; Waurene Heflin, Crye-Leike Realtors; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; Councilman Mike Bryan; Councilman Dick Hill; Anne Cannon, Deco Direct; Marscia Mahoney, Deco Direct; Ellen Kennedy, CDF; and Connie Snell, My Elegant Clutter. Pictured on the back row are: Tina Powell, BancorpSouth; Michael Addison, Go Box; Paul Mize, BancorpSouth; Jim Leeper, Southern Diversified Industries; Mike Maynard, Weatherall's, Inc.; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Carey Snyder, WTVA/WLOV/WKDH; Carolyn Moss, Comfort Inn; Jan Pannell, Sprint Print; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Ann Brazil, Snelling Staffing; Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; and Bert Sparks, WTVA/WLOV/WKDH. Deco Direct is located at 2725-B Old Belden Circle in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.407.0707.

Japan America Society Event Held

Over 150 interested area citizens attended the first local meeting of the Japan America Society of Mississippi (JAS-MIS), to learn more about membership in the Society and to network with both regional and Japanese business men and women. The meeting featured guest speaker, Samuel Shepherd, president of the National Association of Japan America Societies, based in Washington, D.C. The Society, whose mission is to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the people of Japan and Mississippi, is seeking members in North Mississippi.

Applications for membership are welcome from both individuals and businesses in North Mississippi with an interest in the Society. For more information on membership or future JASMIS events, interested parties may contact the Community Development Foundation at 662.842.4521 or visit the Japan-America Society of Mississippi website, www.jasmis-us.com, for additional information.



Both Japanese and area business people networked during a reception held prior to the JASMIS program. Also pictured is Mr. Samuel Shepherd, president of the National Association of Japan America Societies in Washington, D.C.

MAGNOLIA MANOR



A ribbon cutting was held at Magnolia Manor at Tupelo to announce their newest department, In-House Therapy. Pictured on the front row are: Waurene Heflin, Crye-Leike Realtors; Karen Russell, Magnolia Manor; Tracey Holliman, Magnolia Manor; Donna Humphries, Magnolia Manor; Councilman Mike Bryan; Kevin Boutin, Magnolia Manor; Karen Boutin, Magnolia Manor; Debra Haynes, Magnolia Manor; Merle Guyton, Comfort Keepers. Pictured on the back row are: Jamie Gunnells, Elder Script; Brian Quinn; Barbara Smith, Tupelo Airport Authority; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Julianne Goodwin, Express Employment Professionals; and Mike Maynard, Weatherall's, Inc. Magnolia Manor at Tupelo is located at 1514 CR 41 in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.842.6776.

GLOSTER CREEK SALON & SPA



A ribbon cutting was held at Gloster Creek Salon & Spa in Tupelo. Pictured at the event are: Emily Addison, CDF; Benjamin Hill, Rensasant Bank; Councilman Smith Heavner; Paul Mize, BancorpSouth; Sue Golmon, Coldwell Banker Tommy Morgan, Inc.; Jim Leeper, Southern Diversified Industries; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; Carey Snyder, WTVA/WLOV/WKDH; Councilman Mike Bryan; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Councilman Dick Hill; Tina Powell, BancorpSouth; Kim Wilson, Gloster Creek Salon & Spa; Rusty Curbow, Rite-Kem; Carolyn Moss, Comfort Inn; Joni White, Gloster Creek Salon & Spa; Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; Machele Vanlandingham, Gloster Creek Salon & Spa; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Tracy Lauderdale, Gloster Creek Salon & Spa; Julianne Goodwin, Express Employment Professionals; Marsha Williams, Williams Transfer & Storage; and Lauren Rhodes, March of Dimes. Gloster Creek Salon & Spa is located in the Gloster Creek Village, Suite H1A and can be reached at 662.620.7576.

HOT TUBS, POOLS & MORE



To celebrate the grand opening of Hot Tubs, Pools, & More in Tupelo, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held. Pictured on the front row are: Ann Brazil, Snelling Staffing; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; Waurene Hefflin, Crye-Leike Realty; Councilman Mike Bryan; Marty Keith, Hot Tubs Pools & More; Cody Keith, Hot Tubs Pools & More; Carolyn Moss, Comfort Inn; Emily Addison, CDF; and Brandon Holloway, M&F Bank. Pictured on the back row are: Jim Leeper, Southern Diversified Industries; Benjamin Hill, Rensasant Bank; Richard Carleton, Mall at Barnes Crossing; Mike Maynard, Weatherall's, Inc.; Lauren Barber, Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Connie Snell, My Elegant Clutter; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Michael Addison, Go Box; Paul Mize, BancorpSouth; and Michelle Crowe, Regions Bank. Hot Tubs Pools & More is located at 1715 McCullough Blvd. in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.840.5004.

KYOTO



A ribbon cutting was held to celebrate the opening of Kyoto Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar in Tupelo. Pictured with the employees of Kyoto and the CDF Ambassadors are Hai Lam, Kyoto; Hung Pham, Kyoto; Sonesouvah Xayadeth, Kyoto; Councilman Smith Heavner; Councilman Mike Bryan; and Eric Pham. Kyoto Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar is located at 1044 Commonwealth Blvd. in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.620.8157.

CDF Welcomes Pannell

The Community Development Foundation is pleased to announce that Orlando Pannell has been named Director of Community Development for CDF. Pannell comes to CDF with 17 years experience with the Tupelo Fire Department, serving as Fire Marshall for the past four years.

As Director of Community Development, Pannell will work directly with the municipalities in Lee County.

"In this position, it is my desire to be instrumental in helping the underserved communities, and promote business development opportunities for minority owned companies throughout our area," said Pannell.

Pannell, along with his wife Chandra, founded The Message Center church in West Point, MS in October 2004, where he serves as pastor and enjoys leading praise and worship during church services. He currently serves as the National President of the Youth Usher Board for the Churches of the Living God. Pannell and his wife have three children, Orlando, II; Anniyah; and Jessica.



PANNELL

BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE



The Business Roundtable met July 23 at the CDF office. Informative reports were given by such businesses as Gibens Creative Group, Lisa Browning Photography, Multi-Taskers Concierge and Errand Service, and Office Max. Pictured, members of the Business Roundtable enjoy pizza from Old Venice Pizza Company. Also pictured, Tom Booth speaks to the group about the Tupelo Community Theatre.

ACTIVE DATACOMM



A grand opening was held at Active DataComm on July 17. A ribbon cutting was held in conjunction with the event. Pictured on the front row are: Michael Addison, Go Box; Ben Gibbons, Active DataComm; Waurene Hefflin, Crye-Leike Realtors; Joshua Ballard, Active DataComm; John Callahan, Active DataComm; Councilman Smith Heavner; Councilman Mike Bryan; Johnny Fears, Active DataComm; Lucretia Fears; Kristi Palmer, Active DataComm; Chuck Moffatt, Select Connect; Laura Moffatt, Bea Lockett, J. Guyton Group Realty; Beverly Bedford, City of Saltillo; and Emily Addison, CDF. Pictured on the back row are: Paul Mize, BancorpSouth; Benjamin Hill, Renasant Bank; Jennifer Young, Tupelo Airport Authority; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Connie Snell, My Elegant Clutter; Tina Powell, BancorpSouth; Barbara Smith, Tupelo Airport Authority; Julianne Goodwin, Express Employment Professionals; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Lauren Barber, Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal; Mike Maynard, Weatherall's, Inc.; and Richard Carleton, Mall at Barnes Crossing. Active DataComm is located at 1960 McCullough Blvd., Ste. A in Tupelo and can be reached at 662.620.7996.



Newcomers Club Event Held

Families locating to Tupelo/Lee County to work for the myriad industries and businesses in the area have a new outlet to meet other newcomers to the community. The Community Development Foundation has created a Community Newcomers Club to help facilitate a smooth transition for employees and their families moving to the Tupelo/Lee County area to live and work. Events are planned throughout the year to welcome Lee County's newest citizens to the area.

"Our goal through the Community Newcomers Club is to help ease the transition for new families moving to Tupelo and Lee County," said Mary Werner,

Hospitality Committee chairman. "By hosting special events for newcomers in our area we want to welcome them by showing them some of the 'Tupelo Spirit' that makes our community such a wonderful place to live and do business."

The first Community Newcomers Club event was held on July 4 at the annual "All America City Family Picnic in the Park." Participants were able to mingle with other families who have relocated to the area and were given information on things to do in Tupelo/Lee County. Future events are being planned.

For more information on the Community Newcomers Club, please contact Angela Glissen at 662.842.4521.

SNAP FITNESS SALTILLO



To celebrate the grand opening of Snap Fitness-Salttillo, a ribbon cutting was held. Pictured on the front row are: Mark Anderson, Snap Fitness; Thomas Cain, Snap Fitness-Tupelo; Mark Harrison, Snap Fitness-Salttillo; Tina Anderson, Snap Fitness; Billy Anderson, Snap Fitness; Margie Anderson, Snap Fitness; Mayor Bill Williams; Alderman Bill Cherry; Vice Mayor Beverly Bedford; Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; Emily Addison, CDF. Pictured on the back row are: Sue Golmon, Coldwell Banker, Tommy Morgan, Inc.; Richard Carleton, Mall at Barnes Crossing; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Les Perry, North Mississippi Medical Center; Barbara Smith, Tupelo Airport Authority; and Carolyn Moss, Comfort Inn. Snap Fitness-Salttillo is located at 111-A Willowbrook Drive in Saltillo, and can be reached at 662.869.3181.

CDF Begins 60th Anniversary Habitat Project

The Community Development Foundation is celebrating 60 years of service as Tupelo/Lee County's economic development organization and chamber of commerce. As part of the year-long celebration, CDF could think of no better way to exemplify "community building" than constructing a home. As such, CDF has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to construct a new house for a deserving family in the area.

The first workday on the house was held July 19 with volunteers

from Habitat for Humanity, Magnolia Manor, Renasant Bank, Aramark Uniform Services, and Southern Patient Care participating. Workdays are scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays throughout July and August, in two four-hour shifts, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

For more information on the Habitat House or to volunteer for a workday, please contact Jennie Bradford Curlee at 662.842.4521



AUTO SPA



A ribbon cutting was held at Auto Spa, Inc. Pictured on the front row are: Orlando Pannell, CDF; Jim Leeper, Southern Diversified Industries; Amanda Phillips, Key Staff Source; Waurene Heflin, Cyre-Leike Realtors; Beverly Bedford, City of Sattillo; Nathan Chisolm, Auto Spa, Inc.; Anna Chisolm, Auto Spa, Inc.; Councilman Mike Bryan; Summer Bryan; Councilman Smith Heavner; Robert Sevilla, Auto Spa, Inc.; Bea Luckett, J. Guyton Group Realty; Bert Sparks, WTVA/WLOV/WKDH; and Waverley Duncan, Auto Spa, Inc. Pictured on the back row are: Bill McNutt, WLM Insurance, LLC; Brandon Holloway, M & F Bank; Tina Powell, BancorpSouth; Mike Maynard, Weatherall's, Inc.; Connie Snell, My Elegant Clutter; Rusty Curbow, Rite-Kem, Inc.; Jane Myers, Wiggles & Wags Pet Sitting; Michelle Crowe, Regions Bank; Toby Hedges, Shelter Insurance; Jamie Osbim, M & F Bank; and Carolyn Moss, Comfort Inn. Auto Spa, Inc. is located at 220 N Gloster St. in Tupelo, and can be reached at 662.402.4357.

TUPELO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



The July Tupelo Young Professionals event was held at Joe Joe's Espresso, located inside the Renasant Center for IDEAs, in downtown Tupelo's Fairpark District. Pictured, participants played "TYP Bingo" and enjoyed sampling the scrumptious fare at Joe Joe's TYP's, Jenny Sappington, Jeff Overstreet, and John Curlee, all of Renasant Bank, enjoyed the night's activities.

First Friday
Friday, September 5, 2008

CDF 60 Years of Service Celebration Kick-off

The Mall at Barnes Crossing
Food Court

7:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast
Will Be Served.

For more information, call:
662.842.4521

CDF 60th Anniversary DID YOU KNOW?

■ In 1969, the municipalities of Lee County joined together to create a regional planning commission called the Council of Governments (COG). The purpose of this organization is to broaden the communication and cooperation between governmental entities and to provide technical planning and public policy services to Lee County and its municipalities. In 1975, CDF and COG sponsored and financed studies costing \$200,000 for a Coliseum and Ag-Center complex for the citizens of Lee County. The initial COG officers were Mayor James Robbins, Chairman; Supervisor Calvin Turner, Vice-Chairman; Harry A. Martin, Secretary/Treasurer; and Frank Riley, Council Attorney. The current COG officers are Supervisor Tommie Lee Ivy, Chairman; Mayor Jimmy Anderson, Vice-Chairman; and David Rumbarger, Secretary/Treasurer.



Please join us for the next meeting of the
TUPELO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Thursday, August 21, 2008
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

**Tupelo Community Theater
Lyric Theater
200 North Broadway**

Come register to win a pair of season tickets!

**TUPELO
YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS**
www.typs.biz

This is a come and go
business-after-hours event
Refreshments will be served
and door prizes will be awarded
Come network with your peers in the
business community and bring a friend

Please RSVP to typ@cdfms.org

SAVE THE DATE

Second Annual CDF Membership Golf Tournament

Thursday, October 23, 2008
Tupelo Country Club

Information on tournament play and
sponsorship opportunities will be available soon
For more information, please contact
Jennie Bradford Curlee at 662.842.4521



Community Development Foundation
CDF Application for Membership

Please tell us about your organization

Organization Name

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip Code

Physical Address (if different)

City, State, Zip Code

Website

Number of Employees

Category (list located on the back of this application)

Keywords (choose up to 10 words that describe your business)

Main Contact (will receive all chamber correspondence)

Contact Name

Title

Phone

Toll-free phone

Fax

Email address

Additional Contact

Name

Title

E-mail

Areas of Interest (please circle your selections)

Ambassadors

Business Roundtable

Leadership Program

Tupelo Young Professionals

Do we have your permission to use your photos in our chamber publication(s)?

Yes No

Signature and title of authorized person with your company

- My CDF membership check is enclosed \$ _____
- Please send me an invoice
- Please bill payment to: VISA MasterCard American Express
 - Card Number: _____
 - Expiration Date: _____
 - Signature: _____

300 West Main Street, P.O. Box A
 Tupelo, MS 38802-1210
 662.842.4521 Phone
 800.523.3463 Toll-free
 662.841.0693 Fax
www.cdfms.org

B U I L D I N G O U R T E N T H Y E A R



When the parent company of GIBENS CREATIVE GROUP (Redmagnet, Inc.) began in 1999, we knew that both creativity and its professional implementation would play important roles in the success of the company. Now we are building our tenth year - and we are stronger than ever, providing more professional services than ever before. If you have a vision, or simply need help finding one for your business, look us up. Research our company, visit our website, or simply talk to our most strategic partners: our clients. We are confident that what you find will lead you to consider us for any creative need or "big idea" that you need to help you build your ten years, whether it is your first ten or not.



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1098 Cliff Gookin Blvd. (near Gloster St.) in Tupelo
selfstorage-theattic.com

PONTOTOC COUNTY

Sherman RV Center named top dealer

SHERMAN - Sherman RV Center has been named one of Tiffin Motorhomes' Top Dealers for 2008.

Tiffin led all motorhome brands in vehicle reliability/quality, competitive price/value, vehicle design and the five other criteria of dealer satisfaction in the Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association's 2007 industry-wide survey.

Tiffin was one of only five motorhome manufacturers to receive the RVDA's Quality Circle Award for 2007. Tiffin has been honored with the Quality Circle nine of the 12 years it has been presented by the RVDA.

Tiffin produces gas- and diesel-powered Class A motorhomes in five model lines: Allegro, Allegro Bay, Phaeton, Allegro Bus and Zephyr. They are sold through 74 dealers in the U.S. and Canada.

CALHOUN COUNTY

Surveys completed on industrial site

■ PITSBORO - The county is edging closer to having an industrial site ready for development.

Calhoun Economic Development Association director Terry Fales recently told county supervisors that environmental and geotechnical reviews of the proposed site, along Highway 8 between Derma and Vardaman near the silo, have been completed.

BRIEFING

"Three Rivers has advised us that we should also have a cultural assessment, and I have one quote for that from Mississippi Archaeology," Fales said.

Fales also had good news from the northern part of the county, where the bank that holds title to the former Memphis Hardwood Flooring property agreed to sell the milling equipment and partially clear the land.

The Memphis Hardwood, formerly Bruce Co., site has been targeted as a possible industrial site because of the relative flatness and presence of utilities.

TIPPAH COUNTY

Industrial Timber plans to grow to 100 workers

■ RIPLEY - Furniture supplier Industrial Timber has expanded its Mississippi operations during a time when many other businesses in the industry are curtailing their domestic growth.

The Hiddenite, N.C.,-based company last month celebrated the grand opening of its 126,000-square-foot facility in Ripley that cuts wood used in upholstered furniture frames. This is the company's fifth plant in operation.

The building, located in the North Ripley Industrial Park, previously was WoodCraft's frame shop. Industrial Timber was able to keep 40 percent of WoodCraft's machinery, thus minimizing startup time, IT President Craig Larsen said.

Work started July 7 and the first shipment went out July 11.

In addition, the majority of the 30 employees now working at the plant were former WoodCraft employees who had been operating the equipment, said Tracy Dye, the facility's equipment manager.

Dye, along with four other employees, transferred from Industrial Timber's Shannon plant when it was closed and the operations were moved into the Ripley building.

Industrial Timber bills itself as the largest, low-cost supplier of wood frames in the upholstered furniture industry. The company has some 340 workers in plants in Mississippi, North Carolina and Tennessee.

LEE COUNTY

Farmers & Merchants to open new branch Dec. 1

■ MOOREVILLE - Farmers & Merchants Bank broke ground on its newest branch in Mooreville last month.

Baldwyn-based FMB is opening its sixth office. The 2,000-square-foot facility is located at state Highways 371 and 178.

Johnny Hale, a Mooreville native, has been named branch manager.

The office will offer full-service banking, along with extended drive-through hours and Saturday drive-through banking.

With an expected opening on Dec. 1, the FMB branch in Mooreville will initially have five employees.

Pontotoc Progress, Daily Journal reports



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Cook's

Continued from Page 5

Carmichael's merchandise includes serving dishes, kitchen islands, gourmet candies and artwork.

The popularity of items is seasonal. For example, Lehman said pineapple corers and slicers sold like hotcakes in July.

In general, cooking tools (graters, whisks, spatulas, etc.) make up the most of her sales, she said. Her roasted coffee bean business would come in next. Her third most popular category for sales would be food, which includes oils, vinegars, crackers, spices and rubs.

"Our predominant customers come and are looking for something they saw on Food Network or they are doing something in the kitchen and they know we can do something to make it easier," she said.

Male foodies, too

The majority of Lehman's customers are women 30 years old and up, but she said her

male clientele is growing.

"We do get men who come in for the manly grilling products," she said with a smile. "The men who come in here are huge foodies."

Carmichael said she gets a good mix of male and female customers across all age ranges. In fact, she said a 10-year-old boy dragged his grandmother to the store recently and said he wanted all his birthday presents from Culin-Arts.

Lehman said customers come to her store when they are looking for a specialty item, which implies a "different quality than what you find in the grocery store."

And the specialty items typically come with a more expensive price tag. With the economy faltering, Lehman said the pitch for the "more expensive tool is difficult."

But she is quick to pick up a ladle and explain how the handle is angled in a way that makes it easy to get the contents out.

"You pay for the engineering," she said.

Even still, Lehman said she believes it's important that her store has a "range of products

that's good to fit everyone's price point."

Carmichael also added that she was going for the upscale clientele. Some customers will mention that they can get something cheaper at a big box store, and Carmichael said she will tell them that "you get what you pay for."

Lehman also incorporates customer interaction to drive sales, doing a lot of tastings and demonstrations.

"If someone really wanted to know how something tasted, I'd open it off the shelf and let them try it," she said. "Same with the coffee. We'll make you a cup."

She also hosts cooking classes – some she teaches and others hosted by professional chefs – that show participants how to use items in the store.

And she does birthday parties and private events at the store, using the kitchen she added to the 3,000-square-foot selling floor.

"It's still trial and error and seeing how the business works," she said of the four-year-old business. "It's still a challenge, but I wouldn't change anything."

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Brutal

Continued from Page 2F

High Cotton Cafe on Veterans Boulevard in 2005. It lasted six months. Looking back, she said she learned a lot from the experience.

"Location is huge," she said. "People are so fickle about where they will go out to eat.

"Another thing people don't realize is that you have to turn tables. I was able to pay my bills and pay my people, but I didn't bring anything home for six months."

Her advice to people looking to open an eatery?

"It might look like a good idea, but it's tough. The restaurant business is brutal."

Frank Vainisi, owner of five-year-old Vainisi's in downtown New Albany, said he thinks newbies to the restaurant industry are most "surprised by the amount of hours you work for the little bit of money."

"There are going to be days where you are going to look in the mirror and say, 'What are you doing?' I was open two months and I had that moment and I'd been in the restaurant business for 15 years."

OWNING A RESTAURANT, THE COLD, HARD TRUTH

■ If you cook, odds are you've entertained the idea of opening your own restaurant. Here are some tips from restaurant owners - ones who made it and didn't - before you take the plunge:

• "There's no glory in it. You have to love it. If you don't love it, you're going to be absolutely miserable doing it." **Frank Vainisi, owner of Vainisi's in New Albany**

• "Be fully committed to it. It can be rewarding but it can be incredibly challenging. I love people and messing with food and that's why I'm in it." **Al Wallace IV, owner of I.V.'s in Tupelo**

• "A business plan is so important. It goes so far beyond having a good cook." **Denise Backstrom, a Lee County caterer and former owner of High Cotton Cafe in Tupelo that closed after six months**

• "The secret is we work hard and try to provide the customer with quality food and consistent service." **Vainisi**

• "You do have to do the work. You do have to be here. It's not going to run itself." **Rob Lesley, co-owner of Romie's Grocery in Tupelo**

• "Your employees get burnt down just as much as you do." **Rob Lesley**

• "In the restaurant business, finding good help is really tough. When you find people that really work out for you, treat them well, whether it's money or flexibility. And then when you realize you have a dud, get rid of them as soon as possible." **Backstrom**

• "It's the business of the people. It's relationships just like every other business. Relationships with servers who show up and servers who don't come to work." **Leeann Lesley, co-owner of Romie's Grocery in Tupelo**

• "I grew up in the restaurants of Chicago. It's sink or swim. If you can't get in there and cut it, there's someone out there willing to take your place." **Vainisi**

• "Make sure out front looks good. We hardly go out front but it's the first thing our customers see." **Leeann Lesley**

• "Always smile, even when you don't want to you still have to." **Wallace**

His advice when people ask about opening a restaurant?

"Don't," he said. "You find that a lot of people make good lasagna and people tell them to open a restaurant and sell lasagna. But it's a business ... besides I want them to come here."

Rob Lesley at Romie's had worked in the restaurant industry before opening Romie's, so he

said he had a decent idea of what he was getting into. But, there still were a lot of surprises when the restaurant opened.

"You've got to pay taxes," he said, laughing.

He added that even though he had a business plan, he didn't know he had to pay for a Dumpster and how much trash the restaurant would generate or any estimate of the phone bills.

"We've reality checked about 47 times in this business," Lesley said. "When you think you are getting ahead, something comes up."

Al Wallace IV, the owner of six-year-old IV's in Tupelo, said after going to culinary school, working as a chef at Harrah's and now as a restaurant owner, he's found a recipe for success.

"Quality food and quality service at a quality price," he said. "It's a generic formula but it works."

He said a lot of people ask him about getting into the restaurant business because it looks like fun. He promptly sets them straight.

"It's extremely long hours," he said. "You have to love what you do. It's very tough with a family."

Indeed, Leeann credits part of Romie's success to "great, great babysitters" for her three children.

Tony Ford, Romie's bartender and a former restaurant owner, said after more than 20 years in the food industry, he sees the owner's time commitment to a restaurant as crucial.

"That's why restaurant failure is what it is - you have to devote your whole life to it," Ford said.

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