

ANNUAL REPORT

2017

THE CHAMBER

GADSDEN • ETOWAH COUNTY • BUSINESS • COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



2018 board of directors

Chair - Tena King

Chair Elect - Jeff Allen

First Vice Chair - Jonathan Tang

Treasurer - Wilbur Masters

Immediate Past Chair - Jason Wilson

Derrick Griffey

Kendall Lowe Hamilton

Jason Hendon

Steve Hildebrant

Amanda Jackson

Morgan Lavender

Tommy Lee

Tim McCartney

Nanda Patel

Glen Porter

Jan Rowe

Wayne Rowe

Daniel Spencer

Marcus DeShaun Tharpe

Legal Counsel - Christie Knowles



staff

Heather Brothers New, IOM, AACE, President

Leslie Stephens, Operations Director

Whitney Carter, Development Manager

Suzy Jouben, Marketing & Events Manager

Will Mackey, Program Manager

contact

The Chamber, Gadsden/Etowah County

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

RISING ABOVE IN 2018

WE WILL NOT SETTLE FOR COMFORTABLE MEDIOCRITY.

WE WILL DEFINE OUR REALITY.

WE WILL DEFINE OUR FUTURE.

Chamber Members,

I hope you will forgive the implied language, but I recently ran across a very interesting book written by Jen Sincero entitled “You are a Bad***: How to Stop Doubting Your Greatness and Start Living an Awesome Life”. I’m sure you can understand how one would be intrigued by such a title.

Within this self-help text, Sincero offers a short list of 10 ways to achieve “bad***-ery”. I found myself returning over and over to one in particular.

Leap Large: Treat fear as a welcome sign that you’re on the right track.

She elaborates:

Take risks. All the time. Big, hairy, scary ones. Thrilling and terrifying are opposite sides of the same coin – if you’re serious about changing your life, you will be feeling them both. Often. They are excellent signs that you’re on the right path. When you get an intuitive hit to do something scary, run straight towards it before the excuses start seeping in. Risk failure, looking stupid, losing money, getting rejected, being unpopular. Do whatever it takes to follow your heart. It’s that crucial moment where you must decide between leaping into the void or staying put in your comfy mediocrity that defines your reality.

Isn’t it strange how we allow fear to control so much of what we do? I remember reading a popular book called “Who Moved My Cheese” about 15 years ago. Many will remember the resounding message in that book was “What would you do if you weren’t afraid?”. So, it isn’t a new concept. Just a fresh take.

Our community and our economy face many obstacles, and obstacles can be scary. But when we begin to think about obstacles as what they really are – opportunities – the fear begins to fade. When we think about a struggle as a chance for great change, great success, great progress, then we change our perspective and begin to see the truth. And the truth tends to be a lot less frightening than all of those potential scenarios that keep us awake at night.

The Chamber has some new opportunities in 2018 to rise above fear and achieve great things for our community. We are ready for the challenge, and we know you – our members – are, too. You see, we learn every day from our small business owners how to take big risks to get big rewards. We see our industry leaders researching innovation that some may think unconventional or crazy in order to grow the workforce pipeline. We have watched our educators take unpopular positions and stand against the odds to fight for their students in the classroom. We have taken note of our nonprofits that come to the aid of near impossible missions to help our community, braced for rejection but joyous at overcoming.

So, just like our incredible members, we will not settle for comfortable mediocrity. We will define our reality. We will define our future. We will put our hands in yours and run straight toward all that is scary and make no excuses.

This is our commitment to Etowah County. In 2018, we will leap large.

In service,

Heather Brothers New, IOM , AACE

2017 IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION

- Completed the fifth Leadership Etowah Class since 2008, graduating nine students.
- Developed the Discovery Café program to provide training to members on free or readily available business tools.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Facilitated the foundation for a Felon Re-Entry Coalition to form in Etowah County.
- Participated in the Worlds of Work Career Expo.
- Served on local Career Technical advisory councils.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- Ran the second annual Belong Membership drive resulting in 53 new members.
- We hosted our third annual county-wide business expo that brought in more than 1000 attendees to visit 80+ vendor booths.
- In May, the Chamber, along with JSU's Center for Economic Development hosted a Small Business Capital Access and Matching Seminar.

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

- Based on member requests, The Chamber hosted the very first nonprofit need matching drive in November.
- We hosted the third annual Advancing Women to the Top conference and based on wonderful reviews, plan to host the event again in 2018.
- We continue to advocate for area transportation needs, such as the extension of Interstate 759, the Southside Bridge, and other infrastructure needs.

LEADERSHIP

- Began The Big 5: A Pathway to Progress to gather feedback and ideas about Etowah County from individuals throughout the area in order to develop a comprehensive plan for our community.
- Hosted roundtable events with Senator Luther Strange and with Attorney General Steve Marshall.
- In 2017, The Chamber earned state accreditation by the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. Additionally, Chamber President Heather Brothers New earned the Alabama Accredited Chamber Executive designation and the Institute for Organization Management designation.



2017-2021



**ALABAMA ACCREDITED
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

2018 VISION

EDUCATION

- Investigate the feasibility of a “junior board” consisting of college-aged individuals identified as potential leaders in the community.
- Produce an annual awards luncheon that recognizes true Excellence in Education throughout all systems from daycare through post-secondary.
- Establish a Chamber foundation that will provide education opportunities to promote economic prosperity and a strong workforce pipeline.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Advocate for technical courses that promote high level software development programs.
- Establish and assist in maintaining a professional network of human resource managers for the purposes of professional development and advisement of training needs.
- Develop unique sources of employee pipelines through determining obstacles to employment and identifying resources to overcome obstacles, such as felon repatriation, access to free transportation, training opportunities, homelessness and more.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

- Provide a Chamber council for the industry segments of nonprofits, finance and administration, human resources and marketing and sales professionals, for the purpose of sharing best practices and fortifying businesses and professionals serving in those respective roles.
- Provide monthly training opportunities, especially focusing on free technology, for small businesses to enhance small business operations.
- Advocate for #ShopSmallEtowah campaign as part of the Small Business Saturday campaign, as well as throughout the year.

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

- Investigate a general public “taste of” event that would showcase restaurants, food suppliers and food product vendors from throughout the region.
- Consider an annual fundraising event to support the 501 c 3 Foundation once established; possibly a “Dancing With our Stars” concept.

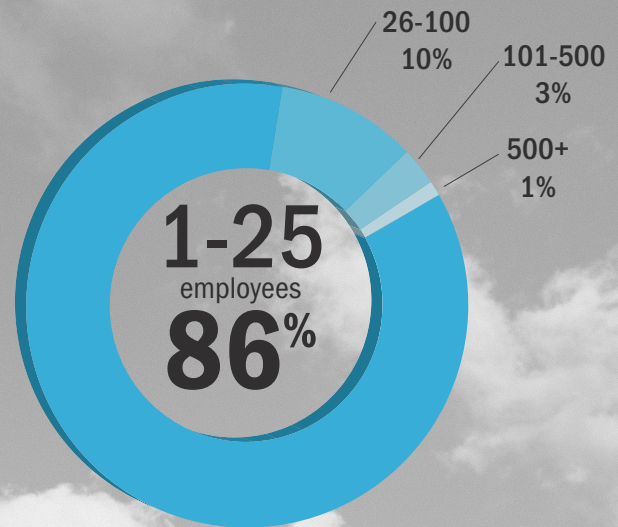
LEADERSHIP

- Produce an annual legislative agenda to coincide with the 2018 state legislative session that includes federal, state and local issues.
- Establish a 501 c 3 foundation for the purposes of soliciting grants and charitable donations for the furtherance of programs and potential educational scholarships.
- Ensure fiscal responsibility and stewardship with special consideration given to furthering the payoff of the land lease with the City of Gadsden.

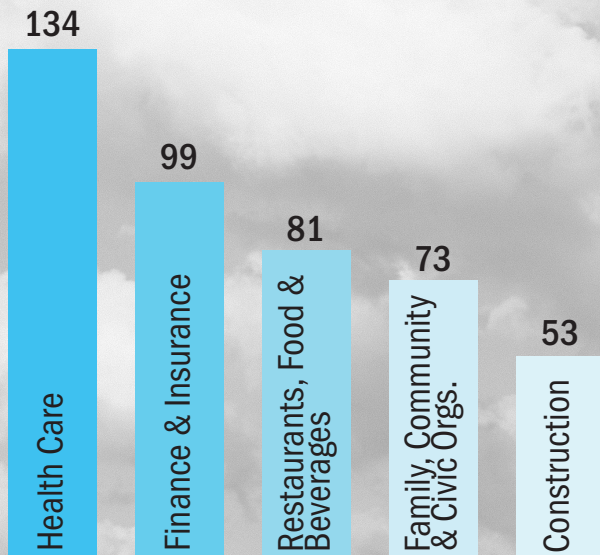
2017 MEMBERSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

Total Members	840
Tiered Members	3
Total Full Time Member Employees Reported	25,541
2017 Total New Members	151
2017 BELONG Campaign Members	53
Total Email Contacts	2,350
2017 Retention Rate	80%

Members by Size



Top Member Categories



Event Data

Event Registrations	5,449
Networking Events	34
Professional Development & Training	30
Ribbon Cuttings & Ground Breakings	52
Member Events Promoted	510
Community Events Promoted	521
Event Sponsorships	176
Website Page Hits	415k+
Online Member Directory Page Views	68k+
Online Member Directory Searches	13k
Online Job Searches	18k

Financial Information

Revenue



	2017 ACTUAL	2018 PROJECTION
Membership Renewals	53%	57%
New Memberships	9%	10%
Sponsorships	31%	32%
Contract for Services (City of Gadsden)	4%	0%
General Support (Etowah County Commission)	1%	1%
Miscellaneous	1%	0%

Expenses



	2017 ACTUAL	2018 PROJECTION
Marketing & Promotion	32%	32%
Administrative	26%	28%
Programming	26%	27%
Building, Auto & Equipment	9%	7%
Travel, Lodging & Training	5%	6%
Debt Service for Land	2%	0%

Social Scoop

Facebook



followers

5,757



new followers

960



average
daily engagement

275



reach

1.2
MILLION

Twitter



followers

1,446



impressions

136k

Instagram



followers

275



new followers

179

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