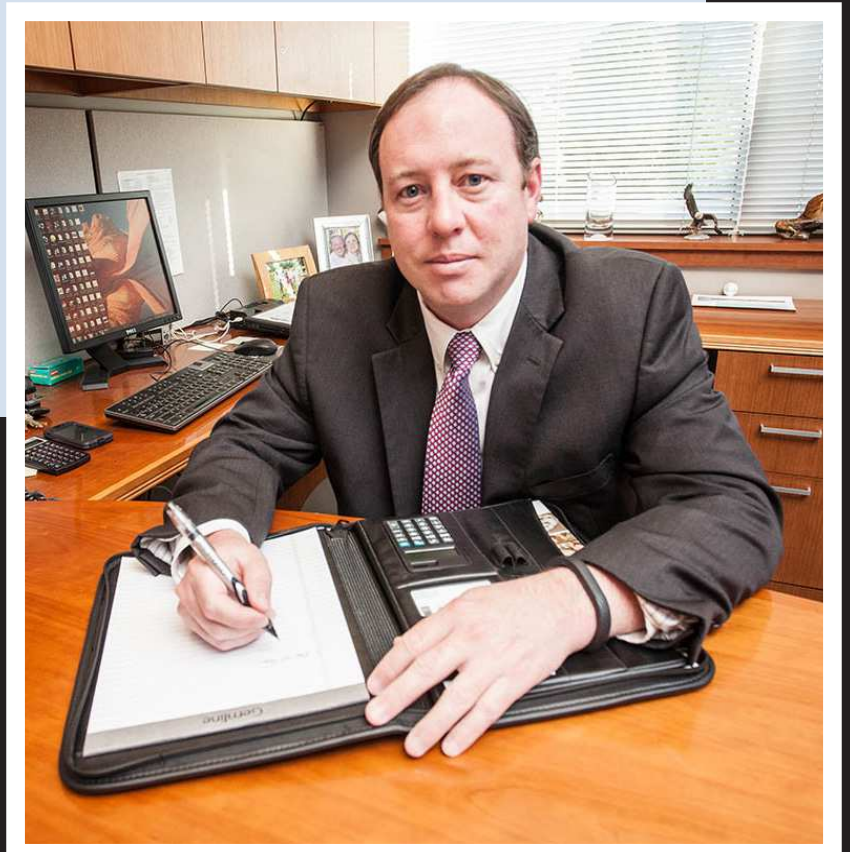




Pell City, Riverside & St. Clair County COMMERCE



UPDATE
February 2015
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO
THE DAILY HOME



Pell City embraces new business opportunities

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

It was announced in 2014 that Standard Furniture Company of Birmingham will anchor a shopping center in Pell City's historic downtown district that is getting a new face-lift.

"Pell City is a market that we have always viewed as an opportunity for a new store," said Jacob Shevin, president of Standard Furniture Company, Inc. "We have been advertising for years in the area and customers have been traveling to our Talladega and Leeds stores. Now these customers will not have to travel as far and we can introduce our quality furniture and outstanding prices to the rest of Pell City and surrounding areas."

He said the company plans to hire eight employees for the new store.

The shopping center is at the corner of Cogswell Avenue and 21st Street and owners of the property, Pell City Developers, LLC, of Birmingham, finalized a development agreement with both the city and the St. Clair County Commission for the planned \$400,000 renovation to the retail center.

In accordance with the redevelopment reimbursement agreement between the county, city and developer, the developer is reimbursed for the actual expense for the facade improvements to the retail center through the non-educational sales taxes generated from the new commercial development.

The city's assistance shall not exceed \$305,000, while the county's share will not exceed \$87,200.

"The combined total of the County Assistance and the City Assistance shall not exceed \$67,500 in any one twelve-month period, with the county's monthly assistance not exceeding \$15,000 and the city's assistance not exceeding \$2,500 in any 12-month period."

According to the resolution passed by the city council, the development is expected to generate about \$1.75 million in sales taxes annually and create about 10-15 full or part-time jobs.

The agreement is terminated after 10 years from the date the first tenant opens in the new retail center or when the developer receives \$392,000 for the investment in the facade improvements of the retail center, whichever happens first.

Officials said the improvements to the property will enhance that area of the city.

While Pell City continues to see new commercial growth, local businesses also continue to prosper.

Some businesses have garnered awards for their service and have celebrated years of service to the Pell City community. Here are a few business highlights for 2014.

METRO BANK

Metro Bank celebrated its 25th anniversary and held a special "community cookout" on the front lawn of its main branch office on U.S. 231.

"This is a way to show our appreciation," Don Perry, CEO for Metro Bank, said as he looked at the large crowd underneath the large tent. "Without them, we wouldn't have this bank."

Bank officials were not sure how the "community cookout" would go over, but it was well received by the community.

"I would never imagine we would have this many people," he said.

"We ordered 850 hamburgers and hotdogs, and we had to go back and buy more."

Randy Bearden, along with other members of the St. Clair County Cattlemen Association,



Town & Country Ford received two significant awards from Ford Motor Company during 2014. The dealership is also building a new facility and renovating its existing building.

Photos by Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

cooked sausages, hotdogs and hamburgers on two large open grills.

"We started cooking 9-9:30 a.m.," Bearden said. And everyone appeared to enjoy their afternoon meal under the large tent set up in the front lawn of the bank.

Perry said this is where it all started 25 years ago, when the late Ray Cox founded Metro Bank in 1989.

"We had a trailer set up right here, where the tent is now," Perry said. "It was a temporary office until they could get the bank built."

TOWN AND COUNTRY FORD AWARD

The Town and Country Ford Pell City dealership was presented two prestigious awards in 2014, the Ford Motor Company President's Award and the ONE Ford Elite Award.

"I would just like to say, 'Thank you,'" Steven Watts, president and CEO for Town and Country Ford, told the staff at the Pell City dealership who gathered inside the main floor of the dealership for the award presentation.

He told the staff that this was one of his proudest moments as president and CEO for Town and Country Ford.

"And y'all are working out of one of the worst facilities," he said.

"The good news is Ford Motor Company has approved our plans."

Town and Country Ford is building a new facility and renovating the existing building in Pell City.

The Town and Country Ford dealership was only one of seven dealerships, from a total of 174 stores, to receive Ford Motor Company's President Award.

The local dealership was only one of two dealerships in the state to capture the One Ford Elite Award.

Ford officials said the awards are based on customer service.

To earn the President's Award, the dealership must exceed customer expectations every day in every department.

The One Ford Elite Award is the best of the best award from the short list of dealerships that receive the Ford Motor Company's President Award.

HOTELS

In 2014, a New York-based real estate investment firm acquired the two major hotels in Pell City.

Jacobs Real Estate Advisors LLC announced the successful acquisition

of the Holiday Inn Express & Suites and the Hampton Inn, both in Pell City.

The hotels are now managed and operated by JREA Management.

Jacobs Real Estate Advisors LLC has been acquiring hotels throughout the United States for the past 18 months, focusing on properties that have an inherent community significance and unrealized intrinsic value, according to a press release from the company.

Jacobs Real Estate Advisors LLC acquired the Pell City hotels from Peachtree Hotel Group, a well-known hospitality investment and management company, for \$11.3 million.

The Holiday Inn Express & Suites Pell City and the Hampton Inn Pell City are held by two newly formed companies, Jacobs Pell HI, LLC and Jacobs Pell HP, LLC.

NEW FACES

In 2014, Lisa Gaither was named the new executive director for the Greater Pell City Chamber of Commerce.

"She has a wealth of experience that she brings to the table for the Chamber," said former Greater Pell City Chamber of Commerce President Paul Lett.

He said the Chamber is fortunate to have Gaither at the helm of the Greater Pell City Chamber of Commerce.

"She has great character and integrity," Lett said, adding that Gaither not only cares about the area, but the people who live here.

"She has a great desire to promote businesses, not just here, but around

the area ... I am looking forward to her taking us to the next level."

Gaither is a Jacksonville State University graduate, holding a bachelor's degree in economics and business administration.

She is an active member of the Pell City Civitan Club and a board member of the Community Action Agency of Northeast Alabama.

Gaither said she knows that as the Chamber executive director, she will wear many hats.

"I look forward to managing, networking and social events, the professional development efforts, service and volunteer opportunities, along with expanding the role in economic and workforce development efforts," she said.

Gaither was a proj-

ect manager for the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education in Montgomery where she worked in work force development.

In 2014, Alabama Power Company announced that Alyson Tucker was named manager of the Alabama Power's business office in Pell City.

Tucker succeeds Tommy Bowers, who retired in 2014.

Tucker is responsible for the customer service and accounting functions for the Pell City office.

She also will be responsible for managing external relationships and fostering community development while retaining oversight of external affairs and communications for the company's Eastern Division.

Tucker has more than 10 years' experience in public relations, media relations and external communications for Alabama Power and Southern Company.

Most recently she served as external affairs coordinator in the Anniston Business Office where she spearheaded critical community development projects with the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville State University, the Young Leaders Society of Calhoun County, Leadership Calhoun County and many others.

Tucker is a graduate of Auburn University with a bachelor of arts in public relations and a secondary degree in marketing. She and her husband, Michael, live in Anniston.



Pell City's Hampton Inn, along with the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, were acquired by a New York-based real estate investment group during the past year.

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Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Pell City was without a Dairy Queen for many years, but the restaurant was warmly welcomed when it opened last year at its location on Highway 231 near Publix and Bojangles'.

New restaurants feed Pell City's growth

By DAVID ATCHISON
Home staff writer

The Pell City commercial community continues to grow and thrive as new restaurants help feed that growth.

Pell City officials point to where the old Food World store once stood.

The grocery store closed, leaving behind a vacant, outdated building, but after extensive renovations, three new businesses are now there, and three new restaurants opened last year along the front parcel of the property, Dunkin' Donuts, Baskin-Robbins and Little Caesars pizza, all under one roof.

A TRIFECTA

It's a new concept that president of Bravo Food Systems, LLC of Birmingham believes the public will embrace and support, and so far it has.

There are three restaurants under one roof, Little Caesars pizza, Dunkin' Donuts and the old-time favorite, Baskin-Robbins.

"It's busier than I thought it would be," said Christopher Arias, vice-president for Bravo Foods, shortly after the food service center opened along U.S. 231 in front of Goody's and Burkes Outlet stores.

Little Caesars opened

first, followed by the opening of Dunkin' Donuts and Baskin-Robbins with about 27 different flavors of ice-cream.

Dunkin' Donut's not only has a wide variety of donuts and pastries, but a breakfast and lunch sandwich menu, which are served both day and night.

HWY 55

Last year, new restaurants sprung up all throughout the city, including the long-awaited Hwy 55 Burgers Shakes & Fries, which is in the Walmart shopping center.

It was the first franchised restaurant the owners of Hwy 55 Burgers Shakes & Fries opened in Alabama, and more openings are planned for the state.

Hwy 55 has a '50s diner décor and customers can sit at the long restaurant counter or at one of the many tables or booths available.

"Our hamburger meat is never frozen," said Gerd "Garrett" Anderson, master franchisee, who along with his partner Rick Nicholson opened their first Hwy 55 Burgers Shakes a& Fries restaurant in Pell City, their first franchise restaurant in the state.

The menu includes a 55-ounce burger!

While customers wait for their meals, they can listen to old-time rock n' roll music.

DAIRY QUEEN

At the north end of the city, along U.S. 231, the new "Grill and Chill" Dairy Queen opened in 2014.

Residents waited with anticipation with the return of the Dairy Queen in Pell City. The city once had a DQ but it was closed many years ago.

The new DQ was a hit, and people packed into the new restaurant. Cars lined up around the new restaurant for the first week or so, before things began to slow down to a normal restaurant pace.

The new DQ serves breakfast at 6 a.m., and the restaurant closes at 10 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and remains open until 10:30 on Fridays and Saturdays. The restaurant is open from 7 a.m.-10 p.m., on Sundays.

BIG WAYNE'S BBQ

Across town in Eden, people can find some of the best barbeque around at Big Wayne's BBQ.

Big Wayne Smith of Lincoln said he enjoys two things in life.

"I love watching football, and I love to eat,"

he said.

It was his cooking for the Saturday college football crowd at home that put him on his course of cooking professionally.

"I've been cooking since I was a teenager," he said.

He finally gave full-time cooking a try in 2014 and Big Wayne hasn't looked back.

His carryout BBQ business continues to thrive at 408 Cogswell Ave. in Eden, which is just west of the historic Pell City downtown district on what is also known as U.S. 78.

Smith said there are good barbecue cooks in the area, but he takes pride in what he cooks, slowly cooking his meats with special seasonings in a wood-burning smoker.

"I have only dealt with great people," Smith said after he opened his BBQ restaurant. "People have been very supportive. They have treated me and my wife well. I can't say enough about the people of Pell City."

OTHER RESTAURANT OPENINGS

In 2014, Argo got its first fast-food restaurant, where people tend to go back, back, back – Jack's restaurant.

The new restaurant is just off Interstate 59 and

U.S. 11.

"We couldn't be more excited about opening this location," Benny LaRussa, CEO and owner of the Jack's, said at last year's grand opening of the restaurant in Argo. "We strive to be a part of the community everywhere we go. As a family company, we're excited to join the Argo family."

There is a Jack's restaurant in Pell City

In Moody, Zaxby's opened its restaurant,

pumping new life and great chicken into the community.

"Our main goal (in the city) has been to promote that property, to get it cleaned up," said Moody Mayor Joe Lee.

"Zaxby's is going to help promote that end of the city for more commercial development."

Lee said after a slow-down, commercial growth appears to be on a comeback. There is also a Zaxby's in Pell City.

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File photo

The presence of Zaxby's and other new restaurants in Pell City are a sign of commercial growth in the area.



Buddy Roberts/The Daily Home
 “We want to be the station you turn on when you’re out on the pontoon, spending an afternoon by the lake or doing yard work at home,” said WFHK owner Adam Stocks, right, at the microphones with his morning show co-host John Simpson.

Pell City’s hometown radio station moves to 94.1

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
 Special Projects Editor

Pell City’s hometown radio station has a new home on the FM dial.

WFHK The River changed frequencies last month to 94.1.

“We were at 94.9, but there was another 94.9 in Birmingham,” owner Adam Stocks said. “Moving to 94.1 will allow us to do what we want to accomplish in covering all of St. Clair and Talladega counties and beyond. The first day we moved to the new frequency, we got calls from people in Hoover, Gadsden and Oxford saying that they were picking us up there, which is a much wider area than we were reaching on 94.9.”

That’s due to a new broadcasting tower “over on Bald Rock Mountain, off I-20,” he said. “FM waves travel line of sight, so you want your antenna as high as you can possibly get it. Our new tower is twice as high as the 94.9 tower was, and that height is what really allows us to expand our coverage area. If you’ve been on Bald Rock Mountain, you know you can see forever from there, up to Oxford, down to Sylacauga and over to Trussville.”

The station continues to broadcast at AM frequency 1430. On the air

since 1956, it was acquired by Stocks Broadcasting in 2000 and began FM broadcasts in August, 2013, when the station was rebranded as The River.

With a new name and a new frequency also came a new format.

“We want to be your new at-work radio station,” Stocks said. “When we went from AM to FM, we changed our format from country to adult contemporary, the hits of the Seventies, Eighties, Nineties and today. For the morning show, it’s me and John Simpson talking local issues, and that’s one of the things that sets us apart. We talk local politics and let you know when there are icy roads. Stations in Birmingham aren’t going to tell you that 174 is iced over or 231 is closed between Ashville and Pell City.”

WFHK will begin its fourth decade of broadcasting Pell City High School football games this fall, “and we’re looking at viable ways of getting some more local schools and local sports on the air,” he said. “St. Clair County is really our focus, and we want to showcase as much of it as we can. Being an active part of the community is important for us.”

By popular demand, one program that left the

air when WFHK went FM will return in a different format.

“We’re bringing back the Swap Shop,” Stocks said. “That was a long-standing show on AM six days a week. It’s coming back one day a week – Saturday at 8 a.m. – and for a 30-minute time slot. The format will be very quick – tell us what you have for sale, tell us what you’re looking for, and on to the next caller. We’re FM, yeah, but we’re still a community radio station.”

The decision to go FM was one that Stocks wasn’t sure would be well received by all of the AM station’s regular listeners.

“With AM radio, your average listener tends to be part of an older audience,” he said. “When we launched FM, our goal was to make it a station that everybody could listen to, but I really thought we’d have a difficult time transitioning our older listeners to the FM format, but I’ve been surprised. They love it.” The nostalgia factor of adult contemporary music may explain why.

“All the songs we play were top 20 hits in their era. So why do we listen to them? Because we like to reminisce. A New Kids on the Block song plays, and you go back to 1989. You hear Milli Vanilli, Debbie Gibson or Tiffany, and you

go back. You have a couple of guys in the car together, they’ll roll their eyes when those songs come on, but when they’re driving by themselves, they’re probably signing along out loud. That’s why we play them.”

There is even a nostalgia factor to Stocks’ ownership of WFHK. After serving as a cryptologist for the U.S. Navy from 1990-1996, he began working part time at the station on weekends “turning knobs and making sure everything worked” while studying for a career in sports information at Jacksonville State University.

It led to production and co-hosting duties with the Alabama Radio Network and JOX 94.5 in Birmingham and eventually to “working out a deal with the previous owner to buy WFHK. Never in a million years did I think I’d ever own this joint, but here we are.”

Since taking ownership, one of Stocks’ main goals has been maintaining the station’s small-town, hometown feel.

“You go to larger cities like Birmingham or even Montgomery, almost all the stations there are corporate-owned, and the conglomerates have a cookie-cutter format,” he said. “Every station, no matter what market it’s in, will use the same con-

cept and the same format. I’ve worked for corporate radio, and I know that takes a lot of the fun out of it. Corporate radio forgets the roots of what radio should be.

“A local station has to

do things differently and make radio fun again. Radio is not hard work. You talk to your co-host, you talk to your listeners, you play the songs people want to hear and everybody has a good time.”

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Northside Medical welcomes 2 new locations

By GARY HANNER
Home staff writer

It was in 2000 that Northside Medical Associates was established with three physicians in the same location in Pell City.

Now, 15 years later, it employs a staff of more than 100, and has a full time provider staff of nine medical doctors and nine nurse practitioners.

Two new locations were added in 2014 with one of those locations being in Moody at 2834 Moody Parkway just beyond what many know as 'the Moody Crossroads.'

Staff

The two doctors there are Lea Clayton and Tom Perkins. All total, there are 16 employees and physicians at Northside in Moody.

Perkins actually opened Parkway Family Practice in 2001. They merged with Northside Medical Associates Dec. 1, 2014.

"It was a great merger," Perkins said. "Northside is a great professional organization with many great physicians and an excellent support staff. It has been a good transition. It's great for the people of the community. There is no driving time to Birmingham or Pell City. We have family physicians here who can take care of the entire family."

Clayton's father, Horace Clayton, was a well-known doctor in Pell City for many, many years.

Lea Clayton has been a doctor now for 20 years. She started at Northside in Moody Jan. 5 of this year.

"I appreciate the opportunity to again be with Northside," Clayton said. "I used to work with them in Pell City. Being back has been a positive experience. It is close to home since I live in Odenville."

When she was a medical student, she actually spent a month rotating in medicine with her dad. Once Clayton finished her residency, she was with Caraway Methodist Medical Center until 2008.

Clayton said it is so important for Northside to be in the Moody area of St. Clair County.

"It is accessible," she said. "This part of St. Clair County is growing so rapidly. I have patients who come from Ashville, Odenville, Margaret, and some from even as

far away as Talladega and Birmingham. This will cut about 40 miles off of their round trip to and from the doctor. It has just been so nice to get back in this area. Northside does offer the specialists patients need when they need them. They have the equipment and the lab technology that is accessible for the doctor. I think it is a niche that we can fill in this community. It is just a blessing."

Services

Northside is very proud of the services they have worked hard to provide for their patients.

Having Lab, Imaging and Pharmacy onsite allows their patients easy access to additional testing or services often needed to effectively diagnosis and treat healthcare concerns.

Human Resources manager Ronnie Harris said it is so very important for Northside to be in the Moody area.

"It expands our base and our ability to provide services for our patients," Harris said. "It opens up the west end of the county so our patients do not have to drive as far to get to the doctor."

Hours at Northside Medical Associates

At Northside Medical Associates, they understand healthcare needs don't always happen on schedule. They are dedicated to providing medical care when you need it.

At Moody, the clinic is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. They are open on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Starting March 2, they will extend the hours during the week until 8 p.m. That will be the after-hours care.

Also on March 2, Northside Medical Associates in Moody will have a grand opening and ribbon cutting.

Chief Operations Officer Laura Gossett said the staff is thrilled to be in Moody.

"We have great plans for the facility and hope to expand and grow what Dr. Perkins has worked so hard to develop over the past 13 years," Gossett said.

"We truly want to become involved in the community and be a positive influence not only in healthcare, but to the community as a whole."



Photos by Gary Hanner/The Daily Home

Northside Medical Associates opened an office in Moody last December. It is located at 2834 Moody Parkway.



Dr. Tom Perkins takes care of one of his patients.



Members of the staff at Northside Medical Associates in Moody include, from left, Melissa Jordan, Nikki Jones, Paige Stone, Tarin Arnwine, Emeli Kimberly, Heather Carlisle, Jordan Barnwell and Michaela Isbell.



Laura Gossett is the Chief Operations Officer for Northside Medical Associates.

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Aultman Dental puts patients first

By **AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD**
Special to The Daily Home

Constant customer care, services and education are a few of the many ways that Aultman Dental puts its patients first.

Aultman Dental located at 2043 Martin Street South in the Publix Shopping Center in Pell City is open Fridays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., but due to the positive response they've received will be opening Mondays too starting Feb. 16.

Leading the helm at Aultman

Dental is Dr. James Allen Aultman, although the good doctor prefers to simply be called Al.

Attaining his undergraduate degree from Birmingham Southern College, Al has his master's from UAB and received his Ph.D from UAB's School of Dentistry. His residency was completed at the VA at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio.

At Aultman Dental, the staff provides "comprehensive advanced dentistry tailored for

each patient."

Inspired to enter the medical field through his mom who is a registered nurse, Al originally wanted to pursue pediatrics, but was referred to dentistry by a mentor and hasn't looked back since. "I love dentistry because of the immediate, direct results I see in my patients."

Offering patients every opportunity to receive the best dental care, Aultman Dental has started the 7 O'clock Club.

"Patients arrive around 6:55 and are out by 7:55 so they

can get to work," said Al. "We understand everyone is busy and we want to help patients reach their dental goals."

When Al isn't in the office, he's cherishing the time he can spend with his newborn-baby-girl Ellie who was 16 weeks old on Valentine's Day, and his wife of five years, Lauren.

Choosing Pell City as a place to establish his practice was easy for Al as he loves the lake.

"It's my favorite place to be."

With one of his main focuses set on educating patients about

dental health, Al is excited to grow Aultman Dental and grateful for his patients.

On the Aultman Dental Facebook page, Al left a message saying, "The team at Aultman Dental has been so blessed to call Pell City home. We need to throw out a gigantic thank you to all the wonderful people who have become patients! Keep it coming Pell City we couldn't have gotten to this point without you." For more information, contact Aultman Dental at 205-812-2005.



Dr. Al Aultman with his wife Lauren and newborn daughter Ellie.

File photo



Aultman Dental in Pell City offers the latest in medical equipment and a personal touch tailored to each patient.

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File photo

Boutique owner JoAnn Bain, with Spook the Chihuahua, who is often on hand at to greet customers at Hattie Lee's.



File photo

"Each piece in our store is unique because you don't want everybody in town to look the same," Bain said.

Hattie Lee's Boutique: Family, fashion, fun

By **AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD**
Special to The Daily Home

JoAnn Bain opened the doors to Hattie Lee's Boutique in December and has had her customers styling ever since.

Bain named her boutique after her maternal grandmother, a woman she was never able to know, who died in 1938 when Bain's mother was only 11. It was a decision that made her mother proud.

"My mom uses a machine to read so I gave her my card to the store and she said, 'Hattie Lee, that's my momma's name.' I told her, 'Momma, that's what I'm naming my store.' She just started crying and was so happy."

Incorporating a feel of home and family in her business, when you step in to Hattie Lee's Boutique you'll see beautiful woodwork from her grandpar-

ents' barn (on her father's side), built in fish scale tins and enter a place like none other in Pell City.

"These things give it extra meaning," said Bain.

As for the fashions and Bain classifies them as unique. "You don't want to go to the grocery store and see five people with what you have on," said Bain. "Each piece in our store is unique because you don't want everybody in town to look the same. I wanted variety."

Filling the racks with sizes small to 3x Hattie Lee's Boutique has a variety of jewelry lines that no one else carries, shoes, scarves and more.

Customers have been delighted to know she's now open.

"People will come in and say I'm so glad you opened because we don't want to go to Birmingham to shop or we're glad to

have you here," said Bain. "I believe Pell City is big enough for all our local clothing stores to be supported by people throughout the city."

Gathering new customers by word of mouth, Facebook and a little advertising in The Daily Home, Bain says supporters from where she started at festivals have followed her to the storefront.

"When I started I set up at festivals like Birmingham Boutique Blowout and the Covered Bridge Festival," said Bain. "People from those festivals were waiting for me to open. I have customers from Gadsden to Hoover to Oneonta come in to shop."

With price points from \$5-\$150 Hattie Lee's Boutique provides affordable to investment pieces that fits everyone's budget.

Another one-of-a-kind element seen at this bou-

tique is its window displays.

"During Christmas we had a festive scene, last month a cute snow scene and this month of course we have Valentine's," said Bain. "This girl (referring to one of the manikins) loves to swing, so she kicked off her shoes and got in this tire swing. I like to do something festive and fun in the windows."

As for why she started Hattie Lee's Boutique, for Bain it was about doing something different.

"I've worked in an office since I was 18. I wanted to do something different," she said. "I like helping people one-on-one to get to the place where they feel and look good."

Bain isn't alone in her endeavors at Hattie Lee's Boutique for she has a Chihuahua named Spook to help here greet customers.

"He's Hattie Lee's

Spook's person," she laughs. "Spook is with me almost everywhere I go every single day. He's a great co-worker and the customers love him."

Grateful to all who helped make Hattie Lee's happen, Bain is looking forward to making them and the community proud.

"I love it," she said. "It's

great to have a job you're excited to go to every day."

Hattie Lee's Boutique is located at 2635 Martin Street South and open Tuesday -Friday from 10am -6pm and Saturdays 10am - 5pm.

"Like" Hattie Lee's Boutique on Facebook for all the latest fun fashion updates.



File photo

Hattie Lee's Boutique offers a variety of clothing, shoes, scarves, jewelry and accessories.

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Photos by Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

"We are looking forward to the year ahead and have some very exciting things happening that will allow us to provide even more opportunities to our customers," said Aliant branch manager Will Hardwick.

Aliant Bank attributes success to 'highly personalized service'

By **ELSIE HODNETT**
Home staff writer

Aliant Bank had a successful year in 2014, which bank officials attribute to its focus on highly-personalized service and deep knowledge of the Alabama markets it serves.

"Our relationship with USAmeriBank has made us a stronger bank because we have the services, resources and knowledge of a big bank but still provide the highly-personalized approach of a small bank," said Will Hardwick, branch manager for Aliant Bank in Pell City.

Aliant is the Alabama operation of USAmeriBank, a bank with more than \$3 billion in assets. Aliant has 15 branches and has done business in the state for more than 115 years.

Hardwick said Aliant has been in Pell City for almost eight years.

"We opened a temporary loan office in Crowell Commons in 2007," he said. "Then they built the current branch which opened late 2009."

Hardwick said the temporary loan office gave Aliant a good customer base when the branch opened.

"We introduced some new technology in the new branch," he said. "We have hand scanners for our safety deposit boxes. We also have teller pods instead of a straight line of tellers. The teller pods allow customers to look at transactions and have better access."

Hardwick said all the bank employees are cross-trained to do all main banking services.

"They can do deposits and cash checks, but they can also open accounts," he said. "This gives our customers faster service, because one employee can do just about anything that customer needs."

Hardwick said the branch also offers financial services, mortgage and banking services, as well treasury management,

that rotate through the branch as needed.

"That's one of the things that makes us unique," he said. "Our size is not so big that we lose sight of our customers and customer service, but we are large enough to provide all the products our businesses and customers need."

Hardwick said the treasury management option allows businesses to use wire and ACH services and deposit capture, so they can do banking from their offices. The feature is similar to mobile deposits for individual customers, but for businesses.

"It's a convenience feature," he said. "We just began the mobile banking at the end of 2014, but it is working well so far."

Hardwick said Prestige Banking is another popular feature Aliant Bank offers.

"The Prestige program is for customers over 50," he said. "It is a bank-managed travel club. The bank puts together trips throughout the year including day trips, overnight trips, two-to-three-day trips and week-long trips. These are guided trips offered at a discounted rate."

Hardwick said there is a wide variety of trips available, and numerous trips each year.

"It's a trip where you don't have to worry about travel or obtaining tickets for an event," he said. "We have had very positive feedback about these no-hassle trips."

Hardwick said Aliant has excellent relationships with a number of government agencies in St. Clair County, with the knowledge to manage public funds and handle governmental restrictions. As part of USAmeriBank, Aliant can also help almost any size business.

"We are looking forward to the year ahead and have some very exciting things happening that will allow us to provide even more opportunities to our customers," he said.



With more than \$3 billion in assets, Aliant Bank has 15 branches in Alabama, including one in Pell City.



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Pell City's Metro Bank celebrated its 25th anniversary with a community cookout on the front lawn of its main branch on Highway 231. The bank was founded in 1989. Bob Crisp/ The Daily Home



The staff of Northside Medical Associates is now available at its Moody location with clinic hours weekdays and Saturdays. File photo



Aultman Dental is open in the Publix shopping center in Pell City. File photo

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WellWay Whole Health: Living life well

By **AMANDA E.H. PRITCHARD**
Special to The Daily Home

WellWay Whole Health Shoppe located off Highway 34 at 2305 Stemley Bridge Road lives off the verse of John 4:10-14 and encourages customers to follow their motto of, "Live Life Well."

WellWay has been given new life in the form of décor and new owners. Formerly Stan's, WellWay owner Karen Sawyer purchased the business from Stan and Joyce Clements who retired after running the business for 16 years.

"I was a customer here," said Sawyer. "I started learning the business and became a part-time worker before buying it."

Providing natural alternatives to promote good health WellWay offers everything from vitamins and minerals to massage and Biofeedback therapy. The Biofeedback or LIFE (Living Information Forms Energy) system, "is capable of accurately assessing and normalizing underlying energetic imbalances; it automatically provides the information needed for the body to restore itself."

This is one of the many new fresh outlooks you'll see at WellWay.

"That's what I love about this field—learning something new every day," said Sawyer.

Sawyer's goal for WellWay is to offer a whole healing facility to the community.

"We're here to provide service to the community. WellWay is here for their overall wellness (body, spirit and mind)."

Staffed with experienced passionate workers, Sawyer says she's excited about the direction the business is going and believes God has blessed her with such an incredible support system. Certified as a health

specialist and family herbalist, Sawyer says what the staff at WellWay are doing is offering a ministry.

"It's something we believe in and believe in doing," said Sawyer.

Open Monday – Friday from 9am to 6pm and Saturdays 9am to 3pm, WellWay is also a local provider of gluten free foods and dairy alternatives such as goat's milk and coconut creamer.

Some WellWay best sellers are cleansers, because as Sawyer says, "Health starts in your gut." Essential oils, multi-vitamins, cholesterol control, heart health, sleeping aides, protein products and PH balanced water make the list as WellWay's best sellers.

A Pell City High School graduate, Sawyer is honored to have this business in her hometown.

"This community is special to me," she said. "To have the opportunity to improve our customers emotions, physical and mental well being, really their overall health is a therapeutic necessity that will improve every aspect of their lives."

When she's not busy at WellWay, Sawyer enjoys spending time with her husband of 26 years, David, and her three children, one is a senior at PCHS this year.

Excited to take on this new chapter in life Sawyer says it's all about living life well.

"We learn from our customers as much as we learn from our studies. When you enjoy coming into work, it's a blessing."

Be on the look out for their soon-to-launch website, www.wellwaywhole-health.com.



File photo

The WellWay Whole Health Shoppe staff includes Brenda Shivelhood, Anita Humphery, Regina Davis, store owner Karen Sawyer and Cimaron Rogers.



File photo

Regina Davis discusses health goals with a WellWay patron.



File photo

Cimaron Rogers helps a customer find the wellness products she needs.



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