

CALHOUN • COUNTY

# BUSINESS

The Anniston Star | MAY 2, 2014



# THE POWER ISSUE

20 of Calhoun County's Movers and Shakers



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# CALHOUN COUNTY Business

## THE POWER ISSUE 20 of Calhoun County's Movers and Shakers

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### WELCOME | BOB DAVIS

## Defining 'power' is no easy task

### How do the powerful execute their power?

Countless books, speeches and academic studies have pondered that question.

Does power, as some would argue, require near constant ascertainment just to remind everyone who's in charge?



**Bob Davis**  
Editor

Or do the truly powerful leave a smaller footprint? Some might say the fullest exertion of power is quietly causing others to ponder its wishes and desires.

These questions were on our editors' minds as we began

Business Calhoun County's power issue. At this point, we should describe what this "Power List" of community leaders is not. It is not a list of the most powerful. It is a list of some members of our community who have power and wield it well. It is not a ranking; our profiles are arranged alphabetically. It was not measured merely by a bottom-line profit statement.

It was difficult to winnow our list down to 20, especially given that we wanted a list that was representative

of many sectors of our community – business, politics, education, philanthropy.

We, meaning the editors, made our decisions through a multi-step process that included polling members of the business community, researching our archives, taking a deep look into the activities of the nominees and considering the impact they make – which, granted, can be difficult to define.

In the end, this is a subjective list. We fully accept that others would make a different list with equally qualified members.

Our hope is that you will learn something about the people on our list. We wanted to know what drives them in hopes that they would provide inspiration. We weren't disappointed in what we found, and we think you'll feel the same.



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## MATT AKIN — PIEDMONT CITY SCHOOLS

# ‘I don’t see things in terms of setbacks’

BY LAURA GADDY

lbgaddy@annistonstar.com

**A**s superintendent of Piedmont City Schools, Matt Akin’s influence extends beyond the small district he oversees.

Akin has forged relationships with Jacksonville State University, Apple Inc. and national education organizations, all to improve Piedmont City Schools. As superintendent, he guides the day-to-day operations of the school district and advises the school board on new programs, personnel decisions and finances.

Much of Akin’s notoriety stems from steps he’s taken to fuse technology with education. In 2009, he began a program to provide take-home laptop computers to students, and many other school systems in the county have followed his lead.

**Age:** 45

**Job title:** Superintendent, Piedmont City Schools

**Hometown:** Hokes Bluff

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in math and education, Jacksonville State University; Master of Arts in math and education, University of Alabama; Master’s Level Certification in education administration, Jacksonville State University; currently enrolled in Education Doctorate program in education leadership at Samford University.

**First job:** Busboy at Top O’ the River restaurant at age 16. First education job was as AP computer science teacher at Anniston High School.

**Family:** Wife, Sandra, and six children: Dylan, Brett, Ty, Taylor, Trevor and Samantha.

**What inspires him:** “Making a difference in the lives of children and in our community as a whole.”

**Best advice ever received:** “Great vision without great people is irrelevant,” from Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great*. “My mom, who was a lifelong educator, always tells me that hiring and supporting great teachers is the most important aspect of a school district. She is right.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “Raising wonderful kids who make me proud on a daily basis.”

**Most challenging project:** “Transforming our education system that is based on a student mastery/competency model instead of the traditional time model.”

**Worst setback:** “I believe the most rewarding accomplishments are the most difficult. I don’t see things in terms of setbacks. I see them as challenges that often require innovation solutions.”

**Favorite books:** *Disrupting Class* by Clayton M. Christensen and *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star/File



**Ken Joiner**  
*Administrator for  
Calhoun County  
Commission*



The Calhoun County Commission congratulates Mr. Ken Joiner on 43 years of public service to Calhoun County

The Citizens of Calhoun County are proud to have such leadership. His service to the public demonstrates the leadership that makes Calhoun County a great place to work and live, as well as a great location for business and industry.

If you are considering expanding a current business or starting a new business venture, look at Calhoun County ---- You will be glad you did!!

We have beautiful parks and residential neighborhoods, superb recreational facilities, magnificently restored historic sites, and museums such as the museum at Janney Furnace.

Our citizens enjoy a high quality of life, and strongly support the arts and entertainment.

## H. BRANDT AYERS — THE ANNISTON STAR/CONSOLIDATED PUBLISHING



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star/File

# ‘Sit down for a drink with an opponent’

BY BILL EDWARDS

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**A** newspaper’s power lies in its ability to marshal facts and views about community issues in a way that enables residents to tell their leaders what they want done.

From the recent past, H. Brandt Ayers, chairman of Consolidated Publishing and publisher of The Anniston Star, cites two examples: Work that The Star did in learning how Anniston’s chemical weapons stockpile could best be destroyed — “I pushed the idea that we’ve got to have some objective scientific evidence” about the process, he said — and the paper’s role as a sounding board for Anniston residents who became disenchanted with the mayor and City Council elected in 2008.

Ayers said both the editorial page and news pages play roles in the democratic processes that can throw elected officials out the saloon door.

“We had a very clear impression the community was fed up” with the Anniston government elected in 2008, Ayers said, therefore a rare front-page editorial was composed with the intent of stirring positive action in the city.

In the end, a new slate was elected in 2012. “We can’t claim we created the success, but we were influential in speaking to leadership that we have to do certain things,” Ayers said.

**Age:** 79

**Job title:** Chairman of Consolidated Publishing, publisher of The Anniston Star

**Hometown:** Anniston

**Education:** Woodstock Elementary, Anniston; Wooster School, Connecticut; University of Alabama.

**First job:** Age 16, pouring molten lead in the stereotype department at The Star’s office on West 11th Street.

**Family:** Wife, Josephine; daughter, Margaret

**What inspires him:** The word he chooses is “moves:” “Hearing our anthem played or our flag displayed at a moment of high achievement for our nation, not necessarily combat.”

**Best advice ever received:** “The personality and character of my father is an example that has been a continuing guide to me: Stand up for principle all day long, but sit down for a drink with an opponent when the sun goes down.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “Being on the right side of history in the civil rights movement,” and to “hold basic beliefs and broadcast them without fear.”

**Most challenging project:** Attempting to improve public education in Anniston. “We’re not there and we’re not nearly there. It’s challenging and it’s disappointing.”

**Worst setback:** The lack of improvement in public education.

**Favorite book:** *The Burden of Southern History* by C. Vann Woodward.

**COL. BRENT T. BOLANDER** — ANNISTON ARMY DEPOT

# ‘If you never fail, you will never truly succeed’

**BY PATRICK MCCRELESS**

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**C**ol. Brent Bolander understands a thing or two about influence. As commander of the Anniston Army Depot, Bolander oversees the single-largest employer in Calhoun County, with more than 2,800 civilian employees and more than 1,100 contracted workers for 652 tenant organizations.

Decisions that Bolander makes can impact thousands of workers from throughout Calhoun and surrounding counties. But the impacts of Bolander's decisions stretch beyond just depot workers. Those workers and their incomes touch basically every business in the area, from car dealerships to grocery stores and home construction.

According to a 2014 report from the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, the depot's annual average local economic impact is \$1 billion. The annual average impact on local business is \$253 million, while the annual average impact on overall local employment is 16,000 jobs.

The depot's efforts are of vital importance to the U.S. military, and Bolander must ensure that work continues smoothly. The depot overhauls and repairs vehicles and small arms for the military — equipment that soldiers depend on for their lives in the field.

**Age:** 49

**Job title:** Commander, Anniston Army Depot

**Hometown:** Dannebrog, Neb.

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in criminal justice, University of Nebraska-Kearney; Master of Science in logistics management from Florida Institute of Technology; Master of Science in national strategic studies from the National War College.

**First job:** De-tasseling corn.

**Family:** Wife, Donna; daughters, Jess and Katie; son, Austin.

**What inspires him:** “To play a role in or observe the growth of individuals and growth of my family — as they seek greater responsibilities, strive to better others, themselves and their environment.”

**Best advice ever received:** “If you never fail, you will never truly succeed.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** His days as a second lieutenant in 1990 at the age of 26, when he was responsible for coordinating the deployment of equipment and more than 1,000 personnel from multiple locations in a foreign country — while also ensuring that his own brand-new wife was ready to be on her own during his deployment for combat operations in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

**Most challenging project:** The project that personnel on the team haven't bought into, perhaps because they are short-sighted, or are unable to see the positive difference their efforts could make.

**Worst setback:** “The death of a comrade. Never knowing if that death could have been diverted if I would have done something more as a leader while that soldier was under my command and my responsibility. . . . his death, although very tragic, has helped me grow and has shaped me, in many ways, to become the soldier, the father and the leader I am today.”

**Favorite book:** “One that is written from a viewpoint of character, courage, truth, steadfastness and honor.”



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

**BARBARA BOYD** — ALABAMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**‘You have to have  
common sense’****BY TIM LOCKETTE**

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**S**ometimes, nothing is more powerful than a lone dissenting voice.

As the only African-American and the only Democrat in Calhoun County’s legislative delegation, Rep. Barbara Boyd, D-Anniston, has become one of a handful of Democrats who rise to speak on some of the House’s most controversial bills, from Ten Commandments amendments to abortion restrictions.

Even though she’s in the minority party, she’s been able to move controversial bills, such as Anniston’s Sunday alcohol sales law, through the Legislature.

**Age:** 77

**Job title:** State legislator, retired educator

**Hometown:** Anniston

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in French and English, Miles College; Master of Arts in supervision and curriculum development and Educational Doctorate in reading and instructional leadership, University of Alabama.

**First job:** French and English teacher, J.W. Darden School, Opelika.

**Family:** Two sons, Frank Boyd Jr. and Reginald Boyd; one granddaughter.

**What inspires her:** “I’m highly competitive and I like to be a winner.”

**Best advice ever received:** “It’s from my grandmother. She said it doesn’t matter how much education you get, you have to have common sense and you can’t forget the people who helped you reach your goal.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** Her family. She’s also proud of being named Lawmaker of the Year in 2013 by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators.

**Most challenging project:** Her dissertation, titled “The effects of a post-secondary developmental reading program on selected college freshmen.”

**Worst setback:** “I’ve had some family issues to deal with, and I’ve had some health issues.”

**Favorite book:** *The Little Engine that Could.*



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

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**GREG BROWN** — B.R. WILLIAMS TRUCKING

# 'Influence people for the better'

**BY EDDIE BURKHALTER**

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**G**reg Brown, chairman and CEO of B.R. Williams Trucking, leads the Oxford company that started in 1958 with two Mack trucks and grew into a fleet of more than 165. It has expanded to include warehousing, program management, crate-building and brokerage services.

Brown oversaw a pivotal moment in the company's history when, in 2001, B.R. Williams Trucking began working with Honda Manufacturing of Alabama. The company had just six months to structure the project and organize a \$6 million investment in new equipment.

Brown also serves on the board of directors for Noble Bank & Trust, and helps promote arts in the area as a board member of the Knox Concert Series. Although no longer an active program, for several years Brown also led his company's involvement in the Class Act mentoring program for students at Anniston Middle School.

"There are a lot more powerful people than me in Calhoun County," Brown said, speaking of his selection. "I'm just blown away that I would even be considered."

**Age:** 55**Title:** Chairman and CEO of B.R. Williams Trucking Co.**Hometown:** Born in Birmingham, grew up in Weaver.**Education:** Bachelor's degrees in accounting and mathematics, Jacksonville State University. Juris Doctorate, Birmingham School of Law.**First job:** CPA at the Anniston accounting firm Kirkland and Company.**Family:** Wife, Dee, and grown children, Erin and Brad.**What inspires him:** "Besides my God, my family and the people I have the opportunity to work with inspire me every day."**Best advice ever received:** "If you want to influence people for the better and for the Kingdom, you have to live a life in front of them that earns the right to have influence on them. Once you are able to influence them, there is no higher responsibility a leader has than to continue to be faithful to the purity of that relationship."**Proudest accomplishment:** "Raising two children with my wife, Dee, who have grown and matured and serve God, and are now beginning to raise their own children with the same priorities."**Most challenging project:** Preparing in 2001 to work with Honda's plant in Lincoln. "Following right behind that, they built a second plant, and we started all over again, this time applying what we learned the first time in growing so fast in a project."**Worst setback:** When the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, forced changes in plans to finance \$6 million worth of new equipment needed for the Honda project.**Favorite book:** The Bible, including the Book of Proverbs. *Managing* by Harold Geneen.

Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

**K.L. BROWN** — ALABAMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**‘Serving others  
inspires me’****BY TIM LOCKETTE**

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**S**tate Rep. Koven L. Brown, R-Jacksonville, may not be the first person who comes to mind when people are listing Montgomery power players, but in his own sphere, he has plenty of clout.

As owner of two of Calhoun County’s best-known funeral homes, he has local name recognition that money can’t buy. A former president of the Order of the Golden Rule, an international society for funeral directors, he has become the state’s chief regulator of the industry, pushing several funeral-home regulation bills in the Legislature.

**Age:** 62**Hometown:** Jacksonville**Education:** Jefferson Davis High School, Montgomery; Kentucky Schools of Mortuary Science in Louisville, Ky.; attended University of South Alabama.**First job:** Apprentice funeral director and embalmer.**Family:** Wife, Mande; daughters Emily Avery and the late Allison F. Brown; three grandchildren and one on the way in July.**What inspires him:** “Serving others inspires me. My funeral service career has been 45 years of trying to serve families at the worst point of their life. My legislative job has also been an inspiration to me. What I have enjoyed the most is trying to solve everyday problems of my constituents.”**Best advice ever received:** “From my father, who always encouraged me to work hard, give my employer a dollar’s worth work for a dollar’s worth pay and be the best at whatever you are.”**Proudest accomplishment:** “Marrying a woman who loves me, unconditionally, and supports me in all that I do and has done so for almost 43 years.”**Most challenging project:** “Getting fellow legislators to overcome the stigma and pass a medical marijuana bill for the state of Alabama.”**Worst setback:** “The financial struggles I had the first several years I was in business in Jacksonville.”**Favorite book:** Tim Russert’s *Big Russ and Me*.

Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

**DON HOPPER** — CALHOUN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

# ‘Every groundbreaking, every expansion . . . proud accomplishments’

**BY BRIAN ANDERSON**

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**A**ny power found in the business world of Calhoun County likely found its home here thanks, in part, to Don Hopper. As executive director of the Calhoun County Economic Development Council for more than a decade, Hopper’s job is to bring commercial industry to the area, helping businesses find locations and services to contribute to the region’s economy. Hopper and the council are the engine that starts Calhoun County’s business sector.

Hopper took over the position in 2001. He said the most powerful thing he can offer for any industry hoping to locate in Calhoun County is the county’s potential, which he said is the product he sells. The lasting impact of the county’s business industry, he said, is what makes him an influential figure in the community.

**Age:** 50

**Job title:** Executive director, Calhoun County Economic Development Council

**Hometown:** Ripley, Miss.

**Education:** Bachelor of science in economics and finance, Union University; master of arts in economics, University of Mississippi

**First job:** Director of the Small Business Development Center, University of West Alabama

**Family:** Wife Deanne; son Trey; daughter Anna Kate.

**What inspires him:** “The sun rising over the field behind my house.

Having dinner with my family. The fact that there are people who, in part through the efforts of our organization, can provide a better life for their families.”

**Best advice ever received:** “A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove ... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “Every groundbreaking, every expansion are all proud accomplishments, whether it is for five jobs or 500 jobs. This and the fact that I have convinced my wife to stay married to me for 25 years.”

**Most challenging project:** “Aside from convincing my wife to stay married to me for 25 years ... Kronospan – months of details and negotiations, but resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in investment.”

**Worst setback:** “Every project we work that decides to locate somewhere else. I take it personally. I really don’t understand why a company would choose to locate somewhere other than Calhoun County.”

**Favorite book:** *The Old Man and the Boy* by Robert Ruark



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star



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**ANTHONY HUMPHRIES** — NOBLE BANK & TRUST**‘Helping other people reach their dreams and goals’****BY DANIEL GADDY**

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**A**nthony Humphries finds banking appealing because he helps people obtain their dreams, such as owning a house or starting a business.

He started his career in the field when a sister’s friend got him an interview at Birmingham Trust. Executives offered him a spot in the company’s management training program, which led to a position with First National Bank of Anniston – his wife’s hometown – in 1978. In 1983, he took a job at AmSouth Bank, where he eventually became senior vice president and business banking manager.

In 2001, Gov. Bob Riley appointed Humphries state superintendent of banks. He served until 2004, then returned to Anniston and started Noble Bank & Trust.

Humphries also is chairman of the Alabama Ethics Commission and serves on the board of the Federal Reserve Bank’s 6th District in Atlanta, representing the region’s community banks.

Community banks are particularly valuable to local areas, he said, because they want to see their cities grow and their neighbors succeed.

Humphries often shares a quote from former First National Bank President Willie Warren: “We are a private entity with a public purpose.”

**Age:** 58

**Job title:** President and CEO of Noble Bank & Trust

**Hometown:** Born in Louisville, Ky., graduated high school in Cullman.

**Education:** Bachelor’s degree in political science, Auburn University; graduate degree in banking from Louisiana State University.

**First job:** Birmingham Trust National Bank.

**Family:** Wife, Cristy; two sons, Todd and his wife, Lindsay, and Chad and his wife, Jordan; two grandchildren.

**What inspires him:** “I would be inspired to be the best person I could possibly be day in and day out. That involves helping other people reach their dreams and goals.”

**Best advice ever received:** “My dad was very much into telling me quite regularly, ‘Work hard and do the right thing.’ His philosophy was, if you did those two things, you’d never go hungry.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “Watching my two sons grow into very responsible, good Christian young men, husbands and fathers.”

**Most challenging project:** “Working through regulatory issues through the economic downturn. I’m actually going to write a book about it.”

**Worst setback:** Having to work with federal regulators in November 2010 to improve Noble Bank & Trust’s management practices and loan underwriting. At the time, he told The Star it was a serious matter, but assured customers the local institution was safe and fundamentally strong.

**Favorite book:** The Bible, as well as the autobiographies of the Founding Fathers.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

## KEN JOINER — CALHOUN COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

# 'Anything that involves a challenge'

BY BRIAN ANDERSON

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**H**ere's one way to measure Ken Joiner's power in the community: the Calhoun County Administration building - where all official decisions of county government are made, where residents go to renew car tags, access title deeds, get business licenses, etc. - is named after him.

Joiner, who is set to retire early next year, has been Calhoun County's administrator since 1972. For more than 40 years, he has been the guiding official for the county's deciding governmental body. All local laws, projects and bids for service in that time have crossed his desk at some point.

Joiner, however, laughs at the word "powerful," and will point out he's not in power. He merely acts as the administrator for the Calhoun County Commission, the elected officials with the power to make the decisions. But after 42 years, no one on that commission has come even close to matching Joiner's tenure.

**Age:** 64

**Job title:** Calhoun County Administrator

**Hometown:** Columbiana until 1972, Anniston since then.

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in business administration from Jacksonville State University.

**First job:** Clean-up on father's construction sites at age 7-8 for 25 cents per hour. Started a painting contracting company while in high school. Worked as police officer while a student at JSU.

**Family:** Wife, Dianne; son, daughter and two grandchildren.

**What inspires him:** "Anything that involves a challenge."

**Best advice ever received:** "From my dad: Life is a series of choices. You make the right choices in life, you will be happy and successful. Make the wrong choices and you will suffer the consequences."

**Proudest accomplishment:** "This award and several others that I have been fortunate enough to receive which were decided by vote of my peers, the citizens of this county or others."

**Most challenging project:** 2008 appointment as receiver and fiduciary of the court for the redevelopment of Fort McClellan.

**Worst setback:** "A County Commission that was elected in the late 1970s that spent four years bickering and fighting. Nothing of significance was accomplished during that entire term."

**Favorite book:** *The Greatest Generation* by Tom Brokaw.



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

## PATRICIA KING — SUNNY KING AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

# 'Surround yourself with smart folks'

BY DEIRDRE LONG

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Patricia King laughs when asked if there's anything in the community that she is not involved in. President of Sunny King Automotive Group — which includes Ford, Honda, Toyota and Scion dealerships — since her husband's death in 1990, King's influence reaches as far as the roads her cars drive on.

The business has sponsored the Sunny King Charity Classic golf tournament for 35 years, which raises at least \$100,000 each year for charities, King said. The group also sponsors the yearly Sunny King Criterium cycling races in downtown Anniston.

"I've just been amazed at the success of the criterium," she said.

King is a board member of Noble Bank & Trust, Anniston's Knox Concert Series, Alabama Power Company and the Business Council of Alabama. She's also involved with Calhoun County Relay for Life, the Public Education Foundation of Anniston, Jacksonville State University and the United Cerebral Palsy Center.

"It's just good for the community," King said. But community involvement isn't just about business. The automotive group employs about 140 people, "and each person is involved with church, civic duties and schools. It's a wonderful extension of our business."

**Age:** 68

**Job title:** President and CEO of Sunny King Automotive Group

**Hometown:** Cedartown, Ga.

**Education:** Jacksonville State University, Southern Institute School of Interior Design and the National Automobile Dealer Academy.

**First job:** Summer job in the payroll department at Southwire in Carrollton, Ga.

**Family:** Three stepchildren and their families in Auburn and Birmingham. One sister and her family living in Tennessee.

**What inspires her:** "Life! Being involved, having purpose and meaning, having something to do every day."

**Best advice ever received:** "Surround yourself with smart folks who know what they are doing."

**Proudest accomplishment and most challenging project:** "The survival of the King organization after Sunny's death in 1990. Thank the Lord, we are still here!"

**Worst setback:** "The aging process!"

**Favorite book:** "I enjoy reading memoirs, biographies, spiritual well-being and personal growth; anything inspirational."



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star



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## DEL MARSH — ALABAMA SENATE

# ‘I have never looked at failure as a setback’

BY TIM LOCKETTE

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**A**ny list of powerful people in Alabama, much less Calhoun County, would have to include state Sen. Del Marsh, R-Anniston.

As president pro tempore of the state Senate, Marsh has more say than almost anybody in which bills make it through the Legislature and which don't.

Wielding influence in the Legislature is a tricky thing — Marsh once referred to the Senate as “35 CEOs” — but nobody else could have pushed through the Alabama Accountability Act, a private-school tax credit that was Marsh's brainchild in 2012.

**Age:** 57

**Job title:** Former small business owner and president pro tem of the Alabama Senate

**Hometown:** Anniston

**Education:** Auburn University

**First job:** Grocery bagger at Liberty Supermarket.

**Family:** Wife, Ginger; son, Justin; daughter, Christine; granddaughter, Sydney.

**What inspires him:** “Taking on challenging projects.”

**Best advice ever received:** “Expect the unexpected.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** Starting his first successful business as a student at Auburn.

**Most challenging project:** Designing and building a new building for Aerospace Coatings.

**Worst setback:** “I have never looked at failure as a setback but instead as a learning opportunity for future success.”

**Favorite book:** *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand.



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

## DAVID McCORMACK — REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

# ‘In health care, it’s people helping people’

BY DANIEL GADDY

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**D**avid McCormack started college as an engineering major, but he decided the field required too much studying, so he changed to accounting. He had always been good at math, and accounting came naturally to him.

After graduation, McCormack took a job in the accounting department of a hospital in his hometown of Fort Walton Beach, Fla. He moved on to become the chief financial officer for a hospital in West Palm Beach.

Throughout his career, McCormack has held CFO and CEO positions at seven other hospitals, mostly in Florida. One of those, however, was in Gadsden, and McCormack and his wife found that they liked the area and thought the region had a lot to offer.

McCormack came to Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center as CEO in May 2009.

Asked if he plans to move elsewhere, he said, “I pray every day we don’t. . . I want to work here forever.”

In addition to the hospital’s foundation, McCormack is on boards of the YMCA, the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, the Anniston Museum of Natural History and the Knox Concert Series.

McCormack said he has to turn down a lot of offers to sit on various boards.

“People think it’s good to have someone from the hospital,” he said. “I think it’s the position, certainly not me.”

**Age:** 57

**Job title:** CEO of Northeast Alabama Regional Medical Center

**Hometown:** Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

**Education:** Bachelor’s degree in accounting, Auburn University. Master’s degree in business administration, Florida Atlantic University.

**First job:** In the accounting department of Fort Walton Beach General Hospital.

**Family:** He and his wife, Karlynn, have three children: David, 25; Alec, 20; and Christie Welch, 28.

**What inspires him:** “I love people, and I love being around people. And fortunately in health care, it’s people helping people.”

**Best advice ever received:** From his father, John McCormack: “Work hard and treat people right.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “It would have to be my three children.”

**Most challenging project:** “Trying to make every patient and every employee happy and satisfied.”

**Worst setback:** “I’ve had many setbacks, but I don’t see them as horrible tragic things. I’ve just been fortunate that the next day, you just move on.”

**Favorite book:** The Bible



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

**EARLON McWHORTER** — SIMPLY SOUTHERN RESTAURANT GROUP**‘Give back to the community’****BY LAURA CAMPER**

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**E**arlon McWhorter, vice president of market development for Simply Southern Restaurant Group in Auburn and former owner of The Victoria Inn in Anniston, McWhorter and Co. and McWhorter Properties, enjoys a challenge. That’s what gets him going in the mornings.

He has often faced challenges in business, but has also accepted them in the public sphere as a member of the board of trustees of Auburn University, as well as local boards including the YMCA and Anniston Country Club. He has also served on the Alumni Board at Auburn University, the Tigers Unlimited Foundation and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. He didn’t take on those positions to gain influence or power, and he doesn’t see himself as influential, McWhorter said. He took on those challenges to give back to the community that had given so much to him.

“We tried very hard to give back to the community, and Anniston was home to us,” McWhorter said.

**Age:** 76

**Job title:** Vice president of market development for Simply Southern Restaurant Group in Auburn. The company owns 80 locations of Chicken Salad Chick.

**Hometown:** Jacksonville

**Education:** Graduate of Jacksonville High School. Bachelor’s degree in building science, Auburn University.

**First job:** Construction labor at Republic Steel.

**Family:** Wife, Betty; daughters, Brenda Aughtman and Beth Casey.

**What inspires him:** Being a part of businesses and growing them. When he sees potential in a business, that’s what makes him want to go to work every day.

**Best advice ever received:** “Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** His family, Betty, his daughters and five grandchildren.

**Most challenging project:** Being a trustee at Auburn from 2001 to 2009 and attempting to bring the board back into accreditation.

**Worst setback:** Nothing really stands out. He’s had disappointments, but those were usually offset by something better.

**Favorite book:** *All Over but the Shoutin’* by Rick Bragg.



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star/File

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**WILLIAM MEEHAN** — JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

# 'Don't take yourself too seriously'

BY LAURA GADDY

lbgaddy@annistonstar.com

Jacksonville State University President Bill Meehan is the chief executive for one of the largest employers in Calhoun County.

More than 1,000 people work for the university as professors, administrative assistants and support staff. In addition, almost 9,000 students attend the institution.

Before being selected as president in 1999, Meehan had a long history with the university. He began working as an instructor in the biology department in 1977 and worked his way up through the executive chain.

As president, Meehan works with state, county and municipal officials to achieve JSU's objectives. At least once a year, he travels to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of the state's congressional delegation.

The decisions he makes have the potential to affect the economic well-being of his employees, his students and the communities they live in.

**Age:** 63

**Job title:** President of Jacksonville State University

**Hometown:** Born in Hartford, Conn.; completed elementary school in Dallas, Texas; finished high school in Birmingham.

**Education:** Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in biology, Jacksonville State University. Educational Doctorate in higher education administration, University of Alabama.

**First job:** Food service while in high school; lots of others before his first professional position as instructor of biology at JSU.

**Family:** Wife, Beth; sons, Drew and Will; daughter, Carol Grace.

**What inspires him:** "Watching our JSU students engage in their collegiate experience."

**Best advice ever received:** "Read, read, read. And don't take yourself too seriously."

**Proudest accomplishment:** "At work is the value we have added to the experience that is JSU. In life: My family."

**Most challenging project:** Getting JSU approved to grant its first doctoral degree in 2011, in emergency management.

**Worst setback:** "The financial challenges that have hit higher education since 2008."

**Favorite book:** *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson.



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

## JULIA SEGARS — ALABAMA POWER

# ‘You never turn your job off’

BY MADASYN CZEBINIAK

The Anniston Star

It doesn't matter if Julia Segars is on the clock or not. As vice president of the eastern division of Alabama Power, she's always the face of the company.

“Always remember people are watching,” she said. “You never turn your job off.”

Segars, who manages a team of 130 workers, is responsible for making sure the residents of 12 eastern Alabama counties have electrical power every day.

In 2013, Segars served as chairwoman of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, which absorbed a lot of her time.

“It's a large job, particularly when we're trying to move the needle forward,” she said. “What we were focusing on – and I say ‘we’ because it is a team – is really getting a regional approach to everything we do.”

Segars now serves as chairwoman of the chamber's Foundation Board and of the Anniston Museum Endowment Committee. She also serves on numerous other boards.

Figuratively, she said, there is a difference between power and responsibility.

“Power is influence over others,” she said. “That can be good or bad. It could be Adolf Hitler or Stalin. It could be Ghandi. Responsibility is using power for the benefit of mankind, doing the right things for the right reasons.”

**Age:** 51

**Job title:** Vice president of Alabama Power's Eastern Division.

**Hometown:** Hoover

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in journalism with a minor in art, University of Alabama.

**First job:** (After college) Public safety reporter for the Tuscaloosa News.

**Family:** Husband, Frank Segars; children, Angie Segars Anderegg (husband, Matt), Todd Segars (wife, Suzanne), Emily Thomas, Tate Thomas; grandchildren, Grace and Claire Segars, Alana Anderegg.

**What inspires her:** “People who give selflessly to help others; imagination and creativity put to work.”

**Best advice ever received:** “My Aunt Sarah Granade, when facing problems or helping others deal with problems or people, always asked, ‘Where is the grace in it?’ Since hearing that said during her eulogy last year, I have tried harder to look for the grace in all people or situations.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “Other than the obvious answer — as a parent — that we have reared our children to be fine adults, I am most proud of seeing the success of young women and men whom I have mentored over the years.”

**Most challenging project:** Working across company lines to ensure the security of computer systems as chief information officer of Alabama Power and Southern Nuclear during 2002 to 2006.

**Worst setback:** “Overcoming questions on whether or not I was serious about my career after going part-time for two years to be able to spend more time with my children when they were young. I would not trade that time, but I had to prove myself to a few people who had a lot of influence on our leadership pipeline.”

**Favorite book:** Non-fiction: *Elizabeth I, CEO: Strategic Lessons from the Leader Who Built an Empire* by Alan Axelrod. Fiction: *A Short History of a Small Place*, by T.R. Pearson.



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

## LEON SMITH — MAYOR OF OXFORD

# ‘If you’re too young and you stop working . . . that hurts you’

BY EDDIE BURKHALTER

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**I**t is impossible to talk about the powerful in Calhoun County without mentioning Leon Smith, who has served as mayor of Oxford for three decades.

Smith has led the city through remarkable growth. During Smith’s tenure, Kronospan announced plans for an Oxford plant, bringing more than 700 jobs to town. The Oxford Exchange and Oxford Commons shopping centers opened, helping Oxford become the county’s retail center.

Before cutting many ribbons on new businesses, Smith cut one of his own. He opened a beverage store on Quintard Drive in Oxford in the 1960s, and later owned an Eastaboga service station. He now serves on the local advisory board for BB&T Bank and owns Papa Joe’s and Crazy Joe’s fireworks stores in South Carolina.

Asked what’s inspired him to stay in the often-demanding world of politics, Smith said it comes down to his will to live.

“If you’re too young and you stop working, I believe that hurts you. I really do believe that.”

**Age:** 74

**Job title:** Mayor of Oxford.

**Hometown:** Corinth, Miss.

**Education:** Dropped out of high school at age 15. Received his high school diploma in the 1980s.

**First job:** Mowing lawns

**Family:** Wife, Delone (died in 2012); sons Gary, John (died in 2006), Danny (died in 2003) and Terry (died in 2012).

**What inspires him:** “Work, and helping the people of Oxford.”

**Best advice ever received:** “Keep your mouth shut.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “The education students receive at Oxford City Schools.”

**Most challenging project:** Oxford’s extension of the Eastern Parkway, now called Leon Smith Parkway.

**Worst setback:** The struggle to source drinking water for the growing city.

**Favorite book:** The Bible.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

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**VAUGHN STEWART** — MAYOR OF ANNISTON**‘Develop Anniston’s youth into productive, active citizens’****BY PATRICK MCCRELESS**[pmccreless@annistonstar.com](mailto:pmccreless@annistonstar.com)

**W**hen Vaughn Stewart ran for mayor of Anniston in 2012, he was one of 11 candidates. With so many names on the ballot, a runoff election was expected.

But with a groundswell of community support, Stewart clinched the position outright, winning at every polling place in the city.

“That’s incredible in itself, and speaks volumes to who he is,” said Anniston City Councilman Jay Jenkins.

Continued support has lent Stewart much influence in his first two years as mayor.

Through Stewart’s leadership and support from the City Council, the city has made strides in its improvement efforts, such as the development of a strategic plan. That plan, intended to guide economic and community development in Anniston, has received widespread community support, with hundreds of residents participating in its development.

“I think he has terrific support within the community,” Jenkins said. “He has a great ability to engage people in the community, which is his strength.”

**Age:** 58

**Job title:** Mayor of Anniston

**Hometown:** Anniston

**Education:** Anniston High School, the University of Alabama and Cumberland School of Law.

**First job:** Renting inner tubes at Tyler Pool in Anniston.

**Family:** Fiancée Alicia Hess Dunaway; son, Vaughn Stewart III; brother Sam Stewart Jr.

**What inspires him:** “The hundreds of Anniston citizens who have given their time, money and expertise to the Model City, especially during the ‘One City, One Vision’ planning process.”

**Best advice ever received:** “When I was on the campaign trail, a man told me, ‘People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.’”

**Proudest accomplishment:** “My proudest accomplishment has been raising the world’s greatest son. In 25 short years, he has graduated with honors from an Ivy League university, worked at the White House, beaten cancer and energized everyone around him with his sense of humor. Yet, after all of that, his next accomplishment never ceases to amaze me. Vaughn will graduate from law school in May, and I know that he will be a powerful voice for the voiceless.”

**Most challenging project:** “To develop Anniston’s youth into productive, active citizens. As the city’s municipal judge for 15 years, I saw what happens when our community fails its youngest members.”

**Worst setback:** “The lack of home rule in the state of Alabama. Across the country — from Chattanooga, Tenn., and Asheville, N.C., to Ann Arbor, Mich. — small cities are leading the way in devising innovative solutions to 21st-century problems. Unfortunately, our Alabama Constitution practically forces cities to seek approval from the state Legislature before we tie our shoes.”

**Favorite book:** *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

## MARTHA VANDERVOORT — INTERFAITH MINISTRIES

# ‘I want other people to give unselfishly . . . I have to model that’

BY MADASYN CZEBINIAK

The Anniston Star

**A**s executive director of Interfaith Ministries, Martha Vandervoort is responsible for managing an 11-person staff and overseeing about 350 volunteers per year.

Part of her job is to find funding for the organization, which has an annual budget of about \$500,000. Though she receives money from grants and outside sources, Vandervoort said she wants more than anything for the community to give to Interfaith.

“For the most part, I look for local funding,” she said.

Vandervoort tries to help people find their own unique gifts that they can use to help the less fortunate.

Vandervoort believes it’s better to serve than to be served and said people should be willing to do the same things they ask other people to do.

“Christ just exemplified being a servant,” she said. “It’s easy to kind of let your ego make you think you’re so important that you think people should be doing things for you. I want other people to give unselfishly, so I feel I have to model that.”

**Age:** 59

**Job title:** Executive director of Interfaith Ministries

**Hometown:** Montgomery

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in pastoral counseling and Master of Arts in agency counseling from the University of Alabama.

**First job:** Patient representative at UAB Hospital in Birmingham.

**Family:** Husband, Kenneth “Buddy” Vandervoort; and three children, Lucy Morris, Kenneth and Will.

**What inspires her:** “Faith in God and being outside with God’s creations. That totally makes me who I am.”

**Best advice ever received:** “Don’t ask somebody to do something that you could do yourself.”

**Proudest accomplishment:** Her work at Interfaith. “There’s a lot more than meets the eye,” she said. She still feels like she’s learning a lot.

**Most challenging project:** Trying to meet the criteria for Standards for Excellence, an accrediting program for nonprofit groups.

**Worst setback:** “I would like for Interfaith to be a bridge builder in our community. I would love to see our faith community unified in serving our community. No doubt God would be pleased!”

**Favorite book:** The Bible, and anything to do with Alabama history.



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

**BILL WAKEFIELD** — WAKEFIELD'S INC.**'Work at what you love'****BY BILL EDWARDS**

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**B**ill Wakefield, president and CEO of Wakefield's Inc., believes his company has influence because it has been an Anniston-area fixture since the 1920s.

Today, however, the company's reach is far wider, thanks to Internet sales.

"Four years ago, I was the Internet department," he said. Now the company has an office of six to eight people serving that market. Alabama- and Auburn-themed clothing is popular everywhere, Wakefield said.

Aside from sports gear, other styles and trends pictured on social websites such as Pinterest have to be part of the company's marketing plan, Wakefield said. Through such sources, potential customers get a sense of style or fashion, and, Wakefield said, "it's up to us to have it."

**Age:** 52

**Title:** President and CEO of Wakefield's Inc.

**Hometown:** Anniston

**Education:** The Donoho School and Auburn University, with a degree in finance.

**First job:** As a teenager, working the floor selling Sedgefield jeans along with fuzzy dice as part of a *Grease* movie promotion.

**Family:** Wife, Deborah Ann; daughters, Maggie and Samantha.

**What inspires him:** "Sales — meeting the customer's needs."

**Best advice ever received:** "If you work at what you love, you'll never work a day in your life."

**Proudest accomplishment:** His two daughters.

**Most challenging project:** The Internet — "it's a different customer," he said. People buying online "have a different set of expectations."

**Worst setback:** The death of his father, Martin L. Wakefield, in 2010, which took away a "good sounding board" for ideas Bill has for the company.

**Favorite book:** The autobiography of Sam Walton.



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

## PHIL WEBB — WEBB CONCRETE & BUILDING MATERIALS

# 'I'm just part of many great organizations'

BY LAURA CAMPER

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**P**hil Webb, owner of Webb Concrete & Building Materials, has spent his adult years contributing to his community through his work on various boards and as a volunteer.

He currently serves as chairman of the McClellan Development Authority and the Knox Concert Series. He is a member of the board of directors for the Calhoun County Home Builders Association, Calhoun County Habitat for Humanity, Jacksonville State University Foundation, Anniston Museum Board, chair-elect of YMCA of Calhoun County, the Anniston Rotary Club, the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce, Noble Bank & Trust, the Anniston Country Club and numerous state boards.

As a small businessman, Webb said, it's important for him to give his time and effort to improve the community because the community gives to him.

Although he has taken a leadership role in many organizations, Webb said he doesn't really think of himself as influential.

"I'm just part of many great organizations that are trying to accomplish good," he said.

**Age:** 56

**Job title:** President of Webb Concrete and Building Supplies

**Hometown:** Heflin

**Education:** Cleburne County High School

**First job:** Worked at the family business, Farmer Supply Co., a hardware store and small concrete plant. It later became Webb Concrete.

**Family:** Wife, Denise P. Webb; son, Vince Webb; daughter-in-law Laurel Webb; granddaughter Emma Katherine.

**What inspires him:** "Knowing that you're a part of something being built, whether that's a house or a commercial building or retail business."

**Best advice ever received:** "I asked my office staff for advice on a gift for my wife for our 25th wedding anniversary. They said get a dog. I now have two Yorkies."

**Proudest accomplishment:** Being a part of the building process of Grace Place at Grace Baptist Church in Oxford.

**Most challenging project:** Acquiring the funds to build a new YMCA in Oxford.

**Worst setback:** The death of his brother and business partner, Ricky.

**Favorite book:** Doesn't like to read, but does read a couple of daily papers and numerous business and economic articles.



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

CLOCKING OUT | TIM LOCKETTE

# 'House of Lards'

## In the halls of the state Capitol, power isn't as sexy as it is on TV

**Power is the great aphrodisiac, Henry Kissinger said.**

After a couple of years working in the state capital as The Star's Montgomery reporter, I'm not so sure about that.

I'm not saying Alabama's lawmakers are ugly. Physically, 90 percent of them are more attractive than Kissinger. (I'll let you figure out whether that's a compliment.)

I am saying that it's probably sexy to tell someone you have to meet with the Secretary of Defense today. It's far, far less beguiling to point out that you're on your way to a hearing about Calhoun County's emergency radios, or stuck in a filibuster on a bill to regulate Birmingham's sewers. I know. I've tried it on my wife.



**Tim Lockette**

Washington, D.C., isn't as sexy as it looks on *House of Cards*, but it has

Montgomery beat hands down. Most people in D.C. don't have a car, and a hamburger costs like \$52, so staying in shape doesn't seem to be an issue. Important people occasionally cruise by in cars with tinted windows. Suppose the car stops, the window rolls down just a bit . . . seductive, isn't it? No matter who turns out to be inside.

State legislators drive themselves around — to Kiwanis luncheons and ribbon-cuttings and all that other

constituent-service stuff. At every stop, there's the food of small-town civic life. Buffets under hot lights. Casseroles so thick they sound like you've got your boot stuck in the mud.

After all that sitting in the driver's seat, they come to Montgomery and sit some more, in big leather chairs in the House and Senate. There they surf Facebook, mostly, while a handful of their colleagues do battle over the Eternal Issues — a lottery, the tax on groceries, the state's two budgets and which agency belongs in which budget. Not everyone rises to speak, but they should, just to avoid getting blood clots.

For all its passing resemblance to the landscape of *House of Cards* — the broad street leading up to the Capitol, the statue of Jeff Davis in his cape like a vampire king — Goat Hill in practice is about as sexy as a dentist's waiting room.

But then, maybe Goat Hill isn't the place to look for lawmakers being powerful. In Montgomery, a legislator is just a single vote. Back in their home counties, thanks to the Alabama Constitution, state legislators have the power to veto just about any proposal that local officials can think of. County commissioners pave roads and listen to residents' complaints, but they can't zone land or even throw an employee-of-the-month party without a nod from the legislative delegation.

For all its passing resemblance to the landscape of *House of Cards* — the broad street leading up to the Capitol, the statue of Jeff Davis in his cape like a vampire king — Goat Hill in practice is about as sexy as a dentist's waiting room.

That's big power. Power like J.R. Ewing had on *Dallas*, which was a pretty sexy show, in part because it's about the power of money, and the things money can buy. The house at South Fork was sitting on top of barrels of wealth, cash that could be pumped right out of the ground.

Alabama has its share of massive, old-school wealth, too. Those oil rigs you see off the Gulf Coast? Some of the money from those goes into a trust fund, which the state has been known to raid for a few hundred million in a pinch. Rail cars full of coal and acres of virgin timber are all written into the state's tax code, although the taxes on some of these things

haven't changed since the days when a *Richie Rich* comic book would cost you 35 cents.

The money is there, but few people on Goat Hill have that kind of rich-people allure. Lobbyists certainly do. Tailored suits, broadcasters' hair. Unlike lawmakers (and reporters), lobbyists don't have circles under their eyes. They've hit the gym today, and they've eaten something in the last 24 hours that wasn't once part of a pig.

If you went by looks alone, you might think it was the lobbyists who are in charge.

Maybe power, real power, is an aphrodisiac after all.

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