

# Blakely-Early County Chamber of Commerce

## Notes & News

First Quarter 2017  
Volume 1, Issue 1

### President's Message

We're already three months into the new year, as strange as that sounds, and it's a time for new beginnings, new ideas, and new opportunities to build our Chamber into a more successful organization. This begins with our staff, membership, and the new and current board of directors.

When mentioning board members, I feel that it is imperative to let everyone know how important board meeting attendance is to the Chamber. Without your presence, there are many important decisions that are not able to be made. To further improve our organization, I implore each and every one of you to attend if you are able. Our meetings are open to the public, so if you know of anyone who would benefit from attendance, please let them know they are always welcome.

Your membership in the Chamber is invaluable. Please know that you all are the cornerstone of the Blakely-Early County Chamber of Commerce. If I can ever be of assistance, don't hesitate to call me at our office (229-723-3741), on my cell (706-614-8612) or email us at [earlycoc@windstream.net](mailto:earlycoc@windstream.net) or email me personally at [kyle.earlychamber@gmail.com](mailto:kyle.earlychamber@gmail.com). Thanks again for all that you do, and I look forward to seeing you all soon. Here's to a wonderful year!

Kyle

### Chamber President Announces STAR Program System Wide Winner

The 2017 STAR students and teachers from Early County High School and Southwest Georgia Academy were honored Thursday, February 16, at the Blakely Rotary Club meeting. STAR students score highest on the Scholastic Assessment Test and are among the top 10 percent or top 10 students of their class based on grade point average. Each STAR student is asked to name his/her STAR teacher.

Chamber President Kyle Kornegay presented the STAR program and introduced the STAR students and teachers to club members. On behalf of the Blakely-Early County Chamber, Kornegay presented gift certificates to the STAR Teachers. Rotary President Buck Grist presented Rotary scholarships to the STAR Students. ECHS STAR student is Steven Richardson, son of Gary

Richardson and Nina Richardson of Blakely. He is also the county system winner and will attend the region STAR banquet in Americus. Stephen chose math teacher Leigh Anne Collins as his STAR Teacher. SGA 2017 STAR student is Cannon Hobbs, daughter of Charles and Holley Hobbs of Blakely. Cannon chose math teacher Gary Woodams as her STAR Teacher.

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### Calendar

- **April 19**  
Chamber Board Meeting
- **April 26**  
Administrative Professionals Luncheon
- **May 4**  
First Thursday

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"Pull for Blakely - or - Pull Out!"

**STAR Congratulations!**  
students honor

The 2017 STAR students and teachers from Early County High and Southwest Georgia Academy were honored Thursday, Feb. 16 at the Blakely Rotary Club's noon meeting at the Blakely Town and Country Club. These outstanding individuals are honored each year by



Richardson Collins Hobbs Woodams

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# 2017 Blakely-Early County Chamber Banquet

***"The Chamber Banquet was something of a Bear—but, quite entertaining!"***

*Gwen Houston served as chairperson for this event. Several Chamber members and staff spent an extensive number of hours planning and coordinating to make the evening a success. Jennifer Howard, owner and operator of Polly's, worked alongside the committee every day. Mayor Anthony Howard also worked with us. Many thanks! Sharon Hunt deserves kudos for her work with the Early Birds and Early Risers. They provided delightful entertainment! We also thank the American Legion for chairs and tables. The courteous servers were students enrolled in classes at Think About It Consulting under the direction of DeWana Fields. Thank you all for a job well done!*

Our Annual Banquet held February 9 was well attended and ticket sales topped recent years. We believe the venue, Polly's; the delicious meal; with dinner performances by the Early Birds and Early Risers was the perfect setting for our Annual Meeting featuring keynote speaker Jonathan "Bear" Woods.



**Jonathan "Bear" Woods  
CFL Star Linebacker**

Many of us knew nothing about Bear Woods and his drive both on and off the football field until earlier this year. His story is not glamorous. He has made an incredible journey from a rural high school on the Georgia-Florida line to the CFL in Montreal, Canada.

Buck Grist said, "Bear Woods has won every kind of award around other than a beauty pageant." Along the way, he attended Troy State University where he roomed with Nate Nolin, vice president at the Bank of Early. They were walk-ons and played football with the Troy Trojans. Their friendship led him to Blakely. His message: faith, hard work, and determination can take you a long way.



**"Miss" Ann Stone accepted the Beautification Award for the Stone Legal Group presented by Vicki Kornegay**

On behalf of Blakely Hometown, Vicki Kornegay presented the Beautification Award to the Stone Legal Group for their work to improve the downtown area.

Chairman Kenneth Hall passed the Chamber gavel to 2017 Chairman Bradley Grantham. Bradley then presented plaques of appreciation to outgoing board members. He also welcomed the new board members: Celia Bostwick, Robert Chester, Lori Haddock, Hank Jester, and Wallace O'Neal.



**2017 Chamber Chairman Bradley Grantham accepts gavel from outgoing Chairman Kenneth Hall**

Grantham said, "It is an honor and privilege to be part of a new day for the chamber. The right pieces are in place to make great strides in economic development for the people and businesses of Early County. I look forward to being a part of that amazing growth."

## Birdsong Peanuts Named ***Business of the Month*** for March



***We salute Birdsong Peanuts and the employees who work hard to make their company safe and successful!***

The Blakely-Early County Chamber of Commerce honored Birdsong Peanuts as the ***Business of the Month*** in March. Birdsong has become a world leader in the peanut industry. The company shells raw peanuts purchased locally from peanut farmers and markets them to customers throughout the world. Birdsong Peanuts operates plants in Georgia, Texas and Virginia, and supplies manufacturers both domestically and internationally.

***We salute Birdsong in Blakely! We appreciate the jobs you provide, humanitarian efforts and your dedication to making life better in Early County and around the world.***

## Youth Leadership Training Kick-Off on February 24th



On February 24 at 8:00 a.m., the Chamber was teeming with energy and excitement. Twenty-five outstanding students from Early County High School and Southwest Georgia Academy were on time—sitting in their seats and ready for our first day of Youth Leadership Training.

The Blakely-Early County Chamber of Commerce—in collaboration with Rotary, Family Connections, and Georgia-Pacific—sponsors and conducts five modules of this valuable training

which was developed by UGA's Fanning Institute.

Gwen Houston welcomed everyone and set out to break the ice in a big way. *By the way, Team II won!*

After the fun, introductions began. Along with the 25 students present, board members and instructors for future classes were also on hand to meet the new group. *Attending: Bradley Grantham, Bronwyn Ragan-Martin, Alli Josey, Robert Chester, Kyle Kornegay and Celia Bostwick.*

### Students Participating In Youth Leadership

#### ECHS

Darneisha Hightower  
Jawanis Hightower  
Alyssa Hodges  
Sydney Locke  
Mary Elizabeth Miller  
Shelbie Morris  
Meerah Patel  
Alexis Powell  
Tamaja Reed  
Ansley Smith  
Dana Smith  
Bridget Harley Smith  
Maggie Smith  
Sutton Stuart  
Jennifer Swofford  
Casey Taylor  
Dallas White

#### SGA

Lanie Bradford  
Annie Bridges  
Andrew Collins  
Justin Scott Grimsley  
Karsyn Massey  
Miller Pickle  
Mason Stuart  
Sydney Thompson  
Jacob Tiner Watson  
Auhlyn Wilkerson

## Blakely Chicken Groundbreaking



Exciting times! Groundbreaking to expand the Mitchell family business--Blakely Chicken--puts a smile on everyone's face. Chamber President Kyle Kornegay, Early County Commissioners, the Mayor and City Council joined Economic Development Director Jamey Crozier and board members as they shared this momentous occasion with the Mitchell family.



***Congratulations to the Mitchell family and everyone who enjoys Blakely Chicken!***

## Alice in Wonderland Jr.

There is no better collaboration for a fundraiser than with the Early Birds and the Early Risers. Chamber president Kyle Kornegay said, "After two dinner performances—and a lot of hard work by the performers and Director Sharon Hunt—we say, thank you to all who supported and made it successful. We were able to earn \$650 for the choral groups and \$650 for the Chamber while providing two delightful evenings of entertainment."



*Hats off to the Early Birds and Early Risers who made the evening magical! Great job, ladies and gents!*

*Special thanks to the parents and supporters who worked behind the scenes. We appreciate Jennifer Howard and Kyle Kornegay for operating the sound system and Magnolias on Main for the wonderful food. The venue was superb—so, thank you to Polly's for working as hard as everyone else to make the evening successful!*

## Blakely-Early County Chamber of Commerce Serves as Vendor and Information Center for Peanut Proud



*Thanks to "Miss" Carol! She assisted with registration and served as hostess at the Information Center during Peanut Proud.*

On Friday, March 24, the Square was alive with people working diligently to prepare for Early County's biggest event—*Peanut Proud*. The Chamber served as the information and vendor registration center. At 5:30 p.m., volunteers were staged at the Chamber to welcome, register, and walk vendors to their stations. Everyone at the Chamber is pleased and honored to be part of such a monumental industry and community collaboration. *It was a blast!*

*The Chamber extends special gratitude to First State Bank and City of Blakely for their support in sprucing up the Chamber with a clean-up for our visitors!*



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*This newsletter is for members and friends of the Blakely-Early County Chamber of Commerce*  
Kyle Kornegay, President & CEO      Bradley Grantham, Chairman      Celia Bostwick, Editor