

CS THE CORNER

A SOUTHWEST MOBILE COUNTY CHAMBER PUBLICATION



 collette
FEBRUARY 2025



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Joshua T. Woods

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE GROUNDS

CHAMPIONING

INNOVATION,

INSPIRING

PROGRESS

Dear Chamber Partners,

February is here, and with it comes an exciting month full of opportunities to connect, grow, and make an impact in our community. As we step further into 2025, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your commitment to making SouthWest Mobile County a thriving place to live and do business. Your support and engagement are what make our Chamber strong, and I am honored to serve alongside you.

The Chamber is working hard to provide valuable resources, networking opportunities, and events that will help you achieve success. Whether you are a longtime partner or just joined, know that we are here to support you.

In January, we kicked off the year with an incredible networking luncheon, setting the tone for what's to come. I greatly appreciate everyone who was in attendance and the board members that shared about various focuses of the Chamber. This month, we continue that momentum with our February Business Luncheon on February 5th at 11:30 am. Be sure to reserve your seat and bring a friend—this is an excellent opportunity to expand your connections! In addition, be sure to take advantage of Coffee with the Chamber and join us for some upcoming ribbon cuttings that will be announced soon!

February is also a great time to recognize the incredible businesses and individuals who contribute to our local economy and quality of life. I encourage you to take a moment to support a fellow Chamber partner this month—shop local, share a referral, or simply reach out to strengthen your professional relationships. Small actions make a big difference!

There is no better time to get involved with the Chamber than now. Whether you're interested in helping plan upcoming community events, becoming a sponsor, we welcome your participation. Your voice and input matter, and we want to hear from you! Be sure to renew your partnership for 2025 and be part of the action!

As always, our Chamber is here to serve you. If there is anything I do to support your business or help you get more engaged, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Best regards,

Josh Woods

SWMCC Board President

Cover Photo: Collette Travel

EVENT CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2025

31

Luncheon Preregistration Deadline

The deadline to purchase an online ticket for the February Luncheon is January 31st at 5:00 pm. Any tickets purchased at the door (if available) will be \$25.00 per person, regardless of partner status.

14

Happy Valentine's Day

We hope you all have a happy Valentine's Day celebrating with your loved ones!

3

TALL Applications Open

The SWMCC Board and Staff are excited to announce that TALL Applications for 2025-2026 high school seniors are now available. Applications are available on our website and in the Tillman's Corner Community Center lobby.

17

CAPS

Community Action Panel Meeting

Time: 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Location: John C. Williams Auditorium

5

Monthly Business Luncheon

Time: 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Location: John C. Williams Auditorium

Speaker: Jack Brinson, Collette Travel

Caterer: Mama's on Dauphin

18

Coffee with the Chamber

Our monthly Coffee with the Chamber is a great opportunity to network with other business leaders and representatives. This event is open for both current SWMCC partners as well as prospective partners.

13

Annual Awards Gala Committee Meeting

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Camellia Room

Open to Chamber Board and Diplomats.

28

Luncheon Preregistration Deadline

The deadline to purchase an online ticket for the March Luncheon is February 28th at 5:00 pm. Any tickets purchased at the door (if available) will be \$25.00 per person, regardless of partner status.



Chamber's Annual Renewal Giveaway: Renew by January 31st for a Chance to Win a Blackstone!

Thank you to everyone who entered our Annual Renewal Giveaway, a fantastic opportunity to start the year off right! All Chamber partners who renewed their partnerships by January 31st were entered into a drawing for a Blackstone Griddle – the perfect addition to your outdoor gatherings or business events!

Winner Announcement:

The winner of the Blackstone Griddle will be drawn at our February Business Luncheon, so be sure to join us for your chance to claim the prize! **You must have a representative present at the luncheon to win, so mark your calendar and make plans to attend this exciting event.**

If you still need to renew, be sure to reach out to a member of our staff today!

MONTHLY BUSINESS LUNCHEON

NETWORKING

FEBRUARY 5TH, 2025

LUNCHEON SPEAKER



Jack Brinson
District Sales

collette

Every Moment of Your Trip Matters

As travelers, we understand that your trip starts at your doorstep and every moment counts. That's why we offer private chauffeur service to and from the airport. It's why we developed an industry-leading travel protection plan. And it's why we offer unrivaled 24-7 support to our travelers out on the road.

We know that the more peace of mind you have, the more you can relax and enjoy the journey. And that's why we're with you, every step of the way.

Travel Protection Plan

We get it. Life happens and plans change. With our unrivaled Travel Protection Plan, you can cancel your trip for any reason, right up until the day before your departure and get a full refund, less the cost of the plan. This is something we've done for decades, because the trust of our travelers matters the most. So go ahead and book that dream trip with confidence — no blackout windows or hidden restrictions.

Private Chauffeur Service

When you buy air with Collette, secure door-to-door chauffeur service to and from the airport, plus hotel transfers, and all internal transfers during your trip. This means a private sedan comes straight to your door, loads your bags, and whisks you off to the airport and back home again when you return. It's the perfect stress-free way to start and end your trip.

Expert Tour Managers

Each Collette tour is guided by a regionally-based expert. This means that from the moment you touch down until the moment you leave, you'll be in the hands of a trusted Tour Manager with insider knowledge about the culture, language, and history of your destination — so you can get the most in-depth experience without any of the stress.

FEBRUARY LUNCHEON SPONSOR



Wings of Life: We are a non-profit, Christ centered, life recovery center empowering individuals and families through spiritual development, education, and opportunity.

We empower people to break destructive life cycles including poverty, addiction, incarceration and family violence. We accomplish this through Christian discipleship, wholistic education, and community partnerships.

Our vision is to see individuals, families, and communities transformed for the glory of God.

www.wings-of-life.org

BUSINESS OF THE MONTH



135 Years of Service

Serving the financial needs of customers and communities started in 1889 in Jackson, Mississippi. Today, Trustmark proudly serves customers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas in over 170 locations, along with a vast network of ATMs and ITMs throughout the Southeast.

Making a Difference

We are a community-focused, values-guided organization making a difference in the lives of our customers and communities. We are committed to service excellence and strive daily to exceed expectations.

What Sets Us Apart

The hallmark of our organization is our associates, who go above and beyond on a daily basis to assist customers, give back to the communities we serve and support one another.

People you *trust.*
Advice that works.

LUNCHEON TICKETS

If you plan to attend the Chamber's Monthly Business Luncheon, **you must purchase a ticket for the event by Friday, January 31st 11:59 pm.** Event tickets are available online at www.swmcchamber.com. Prospective partner and guest tickets are \$22.00 per person, while current partners can purchase a discounted ticket at \$17.00 per person. If your business purchased prepaid luncheon tickets, please email info@swmcchamber.com to reserve your seat(s).

Individuals who purchase a ticket online or reserved a prepaid seat will be eligible for the new "Fast Pass" Registration. An email will go out to those who are eligible on February 4th with further instruction on this process.

For anyone who does not preregister, you will be charged \$25.00 per person at the door (depending on availability). This change applies to all attendees, regardless of whether they are representing a renewed partner or prospective partner.

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Mobile County Sheriff's Office
Polysurveying of Mobile

Gold

Mobile County Sheriff's Office
Payroll Vault

Silver

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Broussard Agency, Inc
Evonik Corporation
Polysurveying of Mobile
Premier Cleaning & Janitorial
Proshield Pest Control
The Grounds

Bronze

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Godfather's Pizza
Rock & Roll Offs

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Lindsey & Waldo, LLC
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New Horizons Credit Union
Occupational Health Center
The Shoulder of the Central Gulf Coast

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Reach out to a member of
our staff for more
information!



COLUMN

THE NEXT LEVEL

THE

As an Executive Director, I've seen firsthand how travel can be a powerful tool for expanding both the vision and the reach of our chamber. While our primary role is to advocate for and support our local businesses, travel—whether it's domestic or international—serves as a vital extension of this mission. It opens doors for strategic partnerships, fosters new ideas, and ultimately creates lasting value for our partners.

Expanding Global and Regional Networks

One of the most significant benefits of chamber travel is the opportunity to connect with other chambers and organizations outside of our local sphere. This is especially important in today's globalized world, where businesses must be aware of trends, regulations, and opportunities beyond their immediate geography. When we participate in conferences or trade missions, we have the chance to learn from peers, exchange best practices, and form partnerships that can directly benefit our local businesses.

For instance, travel to international markets can expose our partners to potential export opportunities or collaboration with global companies that could bring new products or services to the area. Conversely, it allows us to bring knowledge back to our partners, helping them stay competitive and innovative.

Learning From Industry Leaders

By bringing this knowledge back to our partners, we not only keep them ahead of the curve but also position the chamber as a leader in providing timely, relevant resources to our community. Chamber travel, in this sense, is an investment in knowledge transfer that benefits our entire network.

A Catalyst for Collaboration and Innovation

Finally, one of the most exciting aspects of chamber travel is the cross-pollination of ideas. When we visit other regions or countries, we bring back more than just business knowledge—we bring back fresh perspectives. This cross-cultural exchange often sparks new ideas and innovative solutions that can be adapted to our local context.

Furthermore, the collaborative relationships formed during these travels often lead to new initiatives and projects that directly benefit our chamber partners. Whether it's a new joint venture, a shared resource, or a collective response to a common challenge, chamber travel acts as a catalyst for creative partnerships.

Chamber travel is not simply about ticking boxes on a calendar; it is about building the future. Each trip, whether a short regional visit or a long-distance international journey, has the potential to transform the opportunities available to our partners and strengthen the fabric of our community. As we look to the future, we will continue to prioritize travel as an essential strategy for keeping our members connected, informed, and competitive in an ever-changing economy.

In this interconnected world, the value of travel cannot be underestimated. It is an investment in the continued growth and success of our local businesses—and ultimately, the success of our community as a whole.

Join us in registering for our Inaugural Trip to Tuscany for eight days of fun and exploring the beautiful countryside of Italy! You can hear more about the trip at our upcoming Business Luncheon on Wednesday, February 5th.

Tina Poiroux

Executive Director

SouthWest Mobile County Chamber of Commerce

(251) 666-2846



SOUTHWEST MOBILE COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

STUDENT PROGRAMS

EMPOWERING SUCCESS

STAR STUDENTS

Each month, the SouthWest Mobile County Chamber of Commerce recognizes students from local elementary schools for their dedication to learning. This Program would not be possible without our Star Student Sponsors. Congratulations to the following students who were recognized on Wednesday, January 8th, 2025:

- **Scarlett Barnett** from Bright Academy sponsored by Burton Property Group
- **Lily Saechang** from Cottage Hill Christian Academy sponsored by Brian Lancaster, State Farm
- **Avery Earl** from Hollinger's Island Elementary sponsored by Evonik Corporation
- **Abigail Doornbos** from Meadowlake Elementary sponsored by Pilot
- **Lakeyn Powell** from Nan Gray Davis Elementary sponsored by BLP Mobile Paint
- **Zoie Weaver** from Pearl Haskew Elementary sponsored by Roberts Brothers - The Sessions Team
- **Everette Goss** from W.C. Griggs Elementary sponsored by Alabama Power

HANKINS SPOTLIGHT

Hankins High Achiever Award: Honoring Excellence at Hankins Middle School

The SWMCC is excited to announce the launch of the Hankins High Achiever Award, a new initiative designed to recognize and celebrate the exceptional students at Hankins Middle School. This award aims to spotlight young individuals who have not only excelled academically but have also demonstrated strong leadership, community involvement, and a dedication to making a positive impact in their school.

We are proud to announce that the first recipient of the Hankins High Achiever Award was Liam Matthews. Liam has shown remarkable commitment to his studies, maintained an outstanding academic record, and consistently gone above and beyond to help peers and contribute to the school community. Whether through involvement in extracurricular activities, volunteering, or simply being a positive role model, he has set a shining example of what it means to be a dedicated and engaged student.

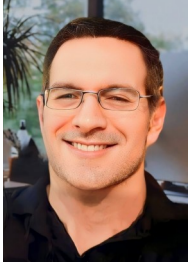
We would also like to extend our deepest appreciation to Treasured Moments Lifestyle Photography whose generous support has made the Hankins High Achiever Award possible. Their commitment to education and local youth ensures that we can continue to recognize the hard work and accomplishments of our students, fostering an environment where excellence is celebrated and encouraged.

As we look to the future, we are excited to continue honoring bright and motivated students through this award, and we look forward to seeing many more students at Hankins Middle School recognized for their dedication, passion, and contributions to their school and community.



BY : RON SIVAK

THE REAL ESTATE CORNER



Pratt Thomas with Merrill P. Thomas Co. Inc. recently reported that RailPort Logistics, located near Rabbit Creek in Theodore, will create over 1,000 new, high-paying jobs and \$600 million in capital expenditure associated with the industrial warehouse development moving into 2025 and beyond. This effort anticipates a completed build out of 5 million square feet over the next five to 10 years. The project is one of only a few of Class A industrial sites nationally served by a CSX rail line. The site broke ground last October with the goal of creating modern distribution warehousing operations that support logistics and light manufacturing operations in the area.

Starting in 2025, Bayou La Batre shipyard Birdon is expected to create 136 new jobs over the next three years, boosting their workforce to over 200 employees. The growth plan follows on the heels of Birdon's acquisition of their Bayou La Batre location nearly a year ago in March 1, 2024, and reflects the company's efforts to support the U.S. Coast Guard with next generation Inland Buoy Tenders vessels known as Waterways Commerce Cutters (WCC). The contractor was awarded a \$1.187-billion contract in 2022 to design and build 27 WCCs over a 10-year period.

In an update, work on the new Mobile International Airport, a \$414-million project, is anticipated to be completed by no later than December of this year and placed into service in early 2026. All commercial air service is also expected to transition over from the Mobile Regional Airport in West Mobile afterwards.

Last month out-of-state investors paid \$745,000 for some 3.8 acres of property located at 88 Telegraph Road in Mobile. The buyers plan to renovate the property for industrial outdoor storage and make available for lease. Pete Riehm represented the buyers and Tommy Gleason worked for the seller. Both agents work for CRE Mobile.

In January Mobile County paid \$1.25 million for 48 acres found at 3461 Halls Mill Road in West Mobile. Crawford Stitt with White-Spunner Realty represented the seller in the transaction. The property is adjacent to the Mobile County Sportsplex and will be developed as part of that site. Matt White of Coastal Alabama Real Estate worked for the buyer in the deal.

An acai bowl restaurant, leased 1,200 square-foot space located in Piccadilly Square at 6543 Airport Boulevard in West Mobile and plans to open soon, according to Leigh Dale Younce and Chris Harle of White-Spunner Realty, who represented the landlord in the transaction.

For questions or news tips about local real estate, please email ron@hflend.com or call/text 251-219-8914.

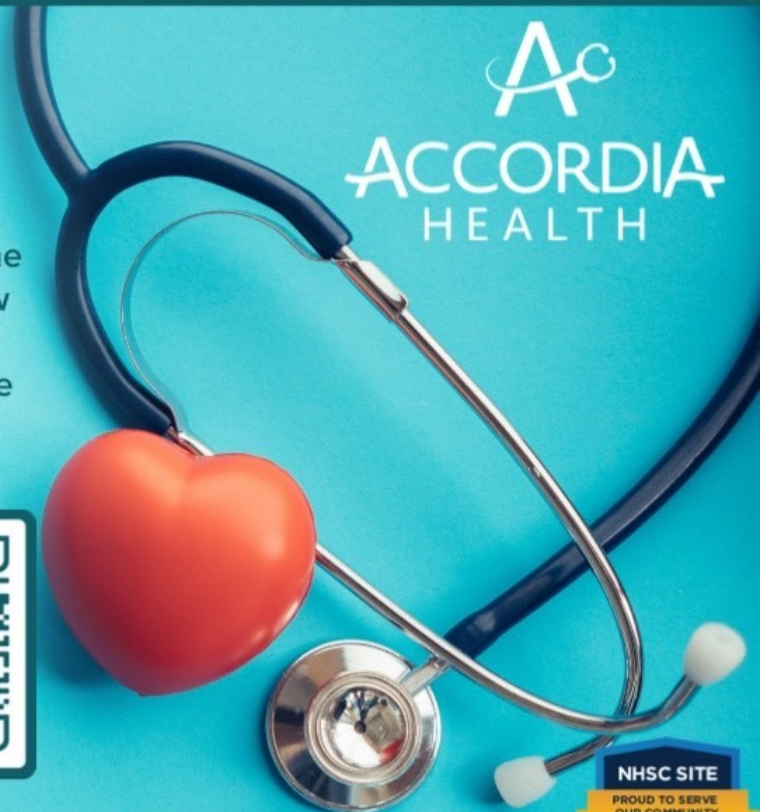


Heart Disease is the leading cause of death in this country.

Time is Precious; *So are you.*

February is American Heart Month—a perfect time to take charge of your heart health! Discover how to reduce your risks of high blood pressure and heart disease through simple, proactive steps like regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and stress management.

Ready to start your journey to a healthier heart? Scan now to find an Accordia Health provider near you and take the first step toward a stronger, happier and healthier you!



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FIRST RESPONDER SPOTLIGHT

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE



Firefighter Johnnie Jones of the Theodore Dawes Fire Rescue



Officer Rick Gathright of the Mobile Police Department

SPONSORED BY

The SouthWest Mobile County Chamber of Commerce would like to thank Century Bank for sponsoring our Officer of the Month and Deputy of the Month Programs. We so appreciate their willingness to continuously recognize such outstanding members of our community. "Century Bank is a proud member of the communities we serve. Our involvement in extracurricular activities, fund raisers, organizations and other local events is a priority for directors, officers and employees of Century Bank."



The SWMCC would also like to thank the Mobile County Sheriff's Office for sponsoring our Firefighter of the Month Program. Sheriff Burch and his team are always willing to step up and help show appreciation to local first responders. "With three decades in law enforcement, he has served in several roles including uniformed patrol, general investigation, homicide investigation, and narcotics/VICE investigation. These accomplishments highlight Paul's dedication to serving the citizens of Mobile in a professional, respectful, and trustworthy manner." Without partners like Century Bank and the Mobile County Sheriff's Office, the Chamber would not be able to impact the SouthWest Mobile County Area as it has.




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HISTORY OF THE MOON PIE

Whether eating the largest MoonPie at a Celebration, catching a MoonPie by a Masker, or even dropped from a building at midnight, no town does MoonPies like Mobile.

“You know all about the beads, parades, masks and mayhem of Mardi Gras in New Orleans. But did you know that the country’s first Mardi Gras celebration was held not in the Crescent City, but 125 miles east, in Mobile, Alabama? It’s true, and there’s more: snack-lovers who get there in time for the parades can seriously rack up on free MoonPies.

Here’s the backstory: In 1703, Mobile was the capital of French Louisiana. French Catholic settlers brought with them their ‘carnival’ traditions of feasting, revelry and merriment on the days preceding Ash Wednesday, which was followed by fasting during the somber, sacrificial season of Lent. Fifteen years later, Louisiana’s capital moved to the newly founded New Orleans, as did the Mardi Gras tradition.

But it’s well-documented that Mobile’s first parade was held in 1711, when 16 men pushed a cart carrying a large papier-mâché cow’s head down the street, kicking off a big outdoors party.

The founding of New Orleans didn’t stop the party. Mobile’s parades evolved into elaborate, multi-weekend affairs, mostly happening between Saturday and the Shrove Tuesday sendoff before Ash Wednesday.

Similar to New Orleans, Mobile krewes are known for hurling a particular Southern delicacy: the chocolate-dipped marshmallow and graham cracker sandwich named after our planet’s only permanent natural satellite.

According to Judi Gullede, who is the executive director of the Mobile Carnival Association and also runs the Carnival Museum, the MoonPie tradition began in the 1940s and 1950s, when float organizers wanted to toss something softer into the crowds than Cracker Jack boxes.

‘The MoonPie became a staple throw in Mobile in the early 60s,’ said Gullede. ‘Members from a local ladies’ organization were in Chattanooga at a convention meeting and ran across some MoonPies, and thought they would make a great throw. The reasoning? They are soft and have some weight to them, so when the ladies’ tossed them, they had some leverage. They were looking for something economical, and MoonPies checked all of the boxes. They brought them back to Mobile and it caught on as a novelty.’

Now, an estimated 500,000 MoonPies from Chattanooga Bakery are thrown each year.

‘While MoonPies are definitely unique to Mobile, most of our other food traditions, like King Cake, beignets and seafood, we share with New Orleans,’ explained Mobile native and local caterer Clifton Morrisette.

“A quick history of Mobile’s moon-pied Mardi Gras”

Written by Mike Jordan

Published on Southern Kitchen on July 24th, 2021



SOUTHWEST MOBILE COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LIGHTS.
CAMERA.
COMMERCE.

gala

FRIDAY, MARCH 21ST, 2025

JOHN C. WILLIAMS AUDITORIUM
5055 CAROL PLANTATION ROAD
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36619

VIP COCKTAIL HOUR:
SIX O’CLOCK IN THE EVENING

DOORS OPEN:
SEVEN O’CLOCK IN THE EVENING

Lights. Camera. Commerce.

An evening of distinction awaits at our esteemed Gala, where we gather to celebrate excellence and honor those whose achievements inspire. This elegant occasion will showcase the presentation of prestigious awards, recognizing outstanding contributions across various fields. Join us for a night of refined elegance, as we pay tribute to excellence and the remarkable individuals who embody it.

Event Details:

Date - Friday, March 21st, 2025

VIP Cocktail Hour - 6:00 pm

Doors Open - 7:00 pm

Attire - Cocktail

For adults age 21 and up.

Registration Deadline:

Friday, March 7th, 2025

Tickets are available at www.swmchamber.com

Be sure to secure your seat today!



BORN TO CELEBRATE MOBILE MARDI GRAS 2025

The schedule below includes downtown Mobile parades. All downtown parades roll on Route A except where noted.

For up-to-date Mobile Mardi Gras info, follow **Mobile Mardi Gras** on Facebook or visit us at mobile.org or our friends at mobilemask.com.

Days, times and routes are subject to change.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

6:30 pm Conde Cavaliers Parade

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

2:00 pm Bayport Parading Society Parade, Mystic DJ Riders

6:30 pm Pharaohs Parade

6:30 pm Conde Explorers Parade

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

6:30 pm Order of Polka Dots Parade

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

6:30 pm Order of Inca Parade

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22

1:00 pm Mobile Mystics Parade

1:00 pm Mobile Mystical Revelers Parade, Mobile Mystical Friends

6:30 pm Maids of Mirth Parade (Route G)

6:30 pm Order of Butterfly Maidens Parade

6:30 pm Krewe of Marry Mates Parade

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23

6:30 pm Neptune's Daughters Parade

7:00 pm Order of Isis

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24

6:30 pm Order of Venus Parade

6:30 pm Miracle On the Bay, Order of Many Faces Parade

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

6:30 pm Order of LaShe's Parade, Order of Olympia

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

6:30 pm Mystic Strippers Society Parade

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

6:30 pm Crewe of Columbus Parade, Krewe de Secondline

SATURDAY, MARCH 1

12:00 noon Floral Parade

12:00 noon Knights of Mobile Parade

12:00 noon Mobile Mystical Ladies Parade

12:00 noon Order of Angels, Joy of Life Parade

5:45 pm Mystics of Time Parade (Route H)

SUNDAY, MARCH 2 (Joe Cain Day)

2:00 pm King Elexis I Motorcade (Route E)

2:30 pm Joe Cain Procession

5:00 pm Le Krewe de Bienville Parade

MONDAY, MARCH 3 (Lundi Gras)

12:00 noon King Felix III Parade

3:00 pm MLK Business & Civic Organization Parade (Route D)

3:00 pm MLK Monday Mystics Parade (Route D)

3:00 pm Northside Merchants Parade (Route D)

7:00 pm Infant Mystics Parade (Route F)

7:00 pm Order of Doves Parade (Route F)

TUESDAY, MARCH 4 - Mardi Gras Day (FAT Tuesday!)

10:00 am Order of Athena Parade

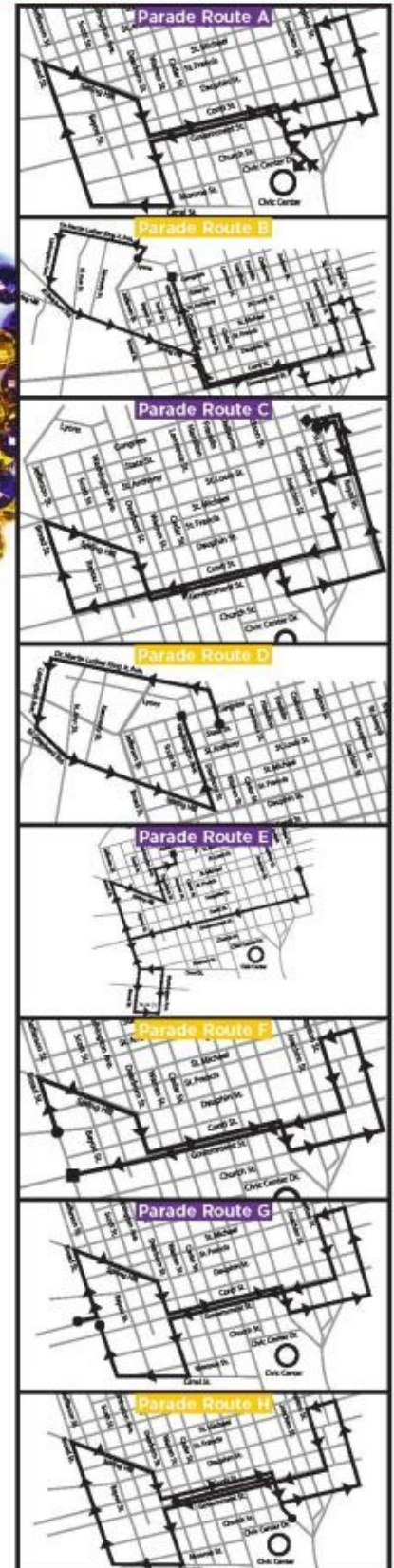
12:30 pm Knights of Revelry Parade

12:30 pm King Felix III Parade

12:30 pm Comic Cowboys Parade

2:00 pm MAMGA Mammoth Parade (Route B)

6:00 pm Order of Myths Parade (Route C)



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Chamber and Community Center Staff

Executive Director

Tina Poiroux, AACE
tpoiroux@swmchamber.com

Administrative Assistant

Hope Driskell
hdriskell@swmchamber.com

Event Coordinator

Jillian Baxter
jbaxter@swmchamber.com

Event Specialists

Calvin Dickerson and Catherine Hartsock

**For Rental Information call the Tillman's Corner Community Center at (251) 666-2488
For Chamber Information call the SWMCC at (251) 666-2846**



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NOT A PARTNER

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