

**BUSINESS  
ADVOCATE**

The 2022 Alabama Small Business of Year Awards were held on December 3rd in conjunction with the BCA and CCAA Annual Meeting and Partnership Event.

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# ***ALABAMA'S TOP SMALL BUSINESSES FOR 2022***



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## RECOGNIZING THE 2022 ALABAMA SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

On November 30, representatives from 46 small businesses from throughout the state gathered in Birmingham to celebrate the best and brightest of our state's small business sector. The 2022 Small Business of the Year Awards luncheon, hosted at The Club, is presented annually by the Business Council of Alabama (BCA) and the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama (CCAA) and seeks to recognize Alabama's top small businesses and the impact they have on their surrounding communities.

"Small business is the backbone of our state and vital to the growth and success of our communities. The businesses recognized through the Small Business of the Year Awards represent the best that Alabama small business has to offer, providing immeasurable value to their local communities and to our state," said BCA president and CEO, Helena Duncan. "We are proud to partner with CCAA to celebrate these businesses and their many contributions and achievements."

The 2022 Small Business of the Year Awards were held in conjunction with the annual meetings of both BCA and CCAA.

"CCAA is proud to partner with BCA in recognizing the deserving businesses named as finalist for the 2022 Alabama Small Business of the Year Awards," stated CCAA President and CEO, Paige Hutto. "Representing the best of the best, each of these small



businesses are a part the backbone of Alabama's economy and help to keep our state running. They are to be commended for their dedication, perseverance, grit and success."

This year, 46 businesses were chosen as finalists for these prestigious awards. Nominations for the 2022 Small Business of the Year Awards were made by local chambers of commerce across the state. Finalists were reviewed by a panel of out-of-state judges in areas including community involvement, chamber participation, business success, and overall deservedness. There were four award categories with a respective gold, silver and bronze winner in each category: Emerging Small Business for those in business for less than five years; 1-10 Employees; 11-50 Employees; and 51-100 Employees.

### EMERGING SMALL BUSINESS COVINGTON CHARM BOUTIQUE

When Opp natives Chance & Melissa McCurley decided to purchase a building on West Covington Avenue in the heart of downtown Opp, their story was just beginning. Soon after, they purchased the building next door for Chance's successful transportation business, and Covington Charm Boutique was born.

Opening in 2021, Covington Charm is a successful ladies boutique catering to residents at their physical location and beyond through their online presence.

The McCurleys did not stop at Covington Charm or the two buildings they originally purchased. In addition, they opened Main Street Treats, partnering with Amazon to participate in the Amazon Hub Delivery Partner Program. They have also purchased three additional buildings in downtown Opp to be revitalized and to become home to other small, thriving businesses.

Through Covington Charm Boutique and their other endeavors, Chance and Melissa continue to find ways to pour love and support back into their hometown. Chance is an active member of the Opp Rotary Club and serves on the executive committee of the Opp and Covington County Area Chamber of Commerce. They are also supporters of the Opp Rattlesnake Rodeo; Opp Schools; Andalusia Office of Professionals Association; Bethesda House; Mizell Memorial Hospital; Meals of Love; and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

### 1-10 EMPLOYEE SMALL BUSINESS CHRISTIE HILL STATE FARM INSURANCE

Since 2019, the all-female team at Christie Hill State Farm has tripled in size in the last three years. They have also doubled the size of the business - growing from protecting 610 households in 2019 to just under 1300 households today. In 2021, they had the



largest growth of any State Farm office in their territory and are on track to do the same this year.

In addition to opening her own State Farm Insurance bureau in 2019, Christie Hill has been active in the local community through various service projects. Christie is involved with the Beauregard School Systems; Opelika City Schools; Opelika Public Library; Girl Boss Program for Girls' Steps; Opelika Fire Department; Southern Union State Community College; and more. She is also a 2017 graduate of Opelika's Citizen's Police Academy. Christie is passionate about giving back and has donated to many local charitable organizations including Pride on the Plains; Opelika High School Theater Program; Opelika Little League; The Curtis House; and the Domestic Violence Intervention Center. Christie invests both time and effort into considering the needs of people within the local community and how her company can support them. She offers many pro-bono services including in-office notary services, Little Free Library of books for adults and children, and photos with the Easter Bunny every Easter.

Christie and her team are integral members in the Opelika Chamber of Commerce where she has been a member since 2017.



She is a sponsor of the Opelika Chamber's Educator's Breakfast and First Responders Breakfast and is an active participant in the Opelika Chamber's 20 Under 40, and the Total Resource Campaign.

### 11-50 EMPLOYEE SMALL BUSINESS JACKSON PLUMBING, HEATING AND COOLING

Since its humble beginnings as a plumbing company in 1987, Jackson Plumbing, Heating & Cooling has grown to be a respected, award-winning business in the Decatur-Morgan County area. Keith and Lori Jackson not only provide 5-star customer service, but they also invest in their employees and their community. Living by the company mission statement of "Providing exceptional solutions in time of need by working together to help improve lives and create clients for life", the Jacksons have built a business on strong character and positive attitudes. The uplifting, family-oriented, atmosphere they have created has promoted personal growth for everyone at Jackson Plumbing, Heating & Cooling.

Keith uses his certification as a John Maxwell speaker and trainer to help others in the community achieve success personally, and professionally. His presentations have been "life-changing", according to Chamber Breakfast & Biz participants.

A staunch advocate for his local chamber, the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, Keith currently serves on the board of directors and as vice chair for the

**COVER:** Representative Danny Garrett (R-Trussville) served as the Master of Ceremonies for the 2022 Small Business Awards held last month at The Club, Inc. in Birmingham.

**LEFT PAGE:** Melissa McCurley, Co-Owner of Covington Charm Boutique in Opp, Alabama, accepts the Emerging Small Business award.

**THIS PAGE:** **Left:** Guests enjoy conversation and lunch in between the BCA and CCAA Annual Meeting and Small Business Awards. **Right:** Keith and Lori Jackson, owners of Jackson, Plumbing, Heating and Cooling in Decatur, Alabama accept the 11-50 employee Small Business Award.

**NEXT PAGE:** **Left:** Christie Hill, owner of Christie Hill State Farm in Opelika, Alabama, accepts the 1-10 employee Small Business award. **Right:** Mike Schmitz, owner of Mike Schmitz Automotive Group, accepts the 51-100 employee Small Business award.



2022 Total Resource Campaign. He also serves on the North Alabama Better Business Bureau and is president of the Decatur Kiwanis Club. Additionally, Keith Jackson serves his community by supporting the Decatur-Morgan Hospital Foundation; Toys for Tots; PACT; Habitat for Humanity of Morgan County; and numerous other agencies. Jackson Plumbing, Heating & Cooling supports the Neighborhood Christian Center by sharing a portion of profits. Team members spend time volunteering, along with Keith, at community events like the Better Business Bureau's Shred Day; Kiwanis Pancake Day; the Salvation Army; the Boys and Girls Club; and Reading is Fundamental.

In a recent community poll conducted by The Decatur Daily, Keith Jackson and his team were named the 2022 Best of the Best in "Plumbing, Heating and Cooling," and "Best Boss". Their



company commitment to excellence has not gone unnoticed by the community.

#### **51-100 EMPLOYEE SMALL BUSINESS** **MIKE SCHMITZ AUTOMOTIVE GROUP**

For nearly 40 years, Mike Schmitz has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of people living in the Wiregrass through the Mike Schmitz Automotive Group, community service and civic engagement. Facing adversity, finding solutions, turning thought into action, and building up those around you are cornerstones of Mike Schmitz's life and his leadership in his business. In 1986 Schmitz moved to Dothan to own his first dealership, a Toyota/GMC franchise. Since then, he has added Mercedes-Benz, Hyundai, Dothan Off-Road and Marine, and Tri-State Collision Center. Employing 78 people with an annual payroll of \$2.3 Million, Mike Schmitz Automotive Group and its

tenacious leaders are impacting the wiregrass in life changing ways.

With the prosperity of Mike Schmitz Automotive Group, came an increased opportunity to do good in the community. Each individual dealership within the Mike Schmitz Automotive Group strives to excel in the areas of client experience, customer care and public service. He encourages his individual dealership leaders and management to expand the impact of the Mike Schmitz Automotive Group further in the community, and they have taken that challenge to heart.

Schmitz has a long been a leader in the Wiregrass community. He has served as 2 term Mayor of Dothan; Houston County School board chair; chair of the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce; chair of Grow Dothan; chair of the Wiregrass United Way, Dothan by Design, Southeast Alabama Gas District, and Wiregrass Children's Home. Mike Schmitz shows no signs of stopping with his current appointment as Civilian Aid to the Secretary of the Army. **BA**

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