

Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce  
2012 Program of Work

Executive Summary



Presented to the Board of Directors  
November 17, 2011

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## Introduction

The Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce reports a successful and productive 2011. Positive awareness of the Chamber was elevated through stellar programming and heightened media coverage at our many events. It is my belief that we are successful because we provide solid programming, are focused on what is important to the membership, attract great volunteers, and because of our dedicated professional staff.

### Highlights of 2011:

- **Supported Small Business:**
  - Grew the “Shop Aiken” campaign with additional print ads and radio spots that remind readers to Shop Aiken for gifts, services and dining.
  - Collaborated with the Aiken Downtown Development Association and North Augusta Chamber of Commerce on Small Business Saturday, the national campaign encouraging everyone to shop with small independent businesses the Saturday after Thanksgiving. The local campaign included print ads, radio spots, and a joint effort with the Aiken Standard and North Augusta Star newspapers.
  - The Chamber raised the Business Academy to the next level with timely programs on social media, smart phones, and mobile applications. Total attendance for *Social Media Boot Camp*; *Social Media Legal Issues*; and *iBusiness – iPhones, Androids, and Apps* exceeded 300.
- **Completed Major Equine Initiatives:**
  - Released an International Horse Park white paper outlining a vision for an international horse park in Aiken County.
  - Supported the creation of the Greater Aiken Integrated Trails Foundation.
- **Advocated on behalf of member businesses to create a climate of growth and success.**
  - Advocated for funding for the MOX construction project at the Savannah River Site. The Continuing Resolution (CR) to ensure funding for 2011 passed both the U.S. House and Senate in the spring.
  - Advocated for funding for H Canyon, which was in jeopardy of being permanently closed, at the Savannah River Site. The Continuing Resolution (CR) to ensure funding for 2011 passed both the U.S. House and Senate in the spring.
  - Advocated for no changes to the language in the City of Aiken’s Planned Commercial (PC) ordinance, which would have negatively impacted business development and growth
- **Partnered for Collaboration on Regional Issues:**

Spearheaded efforts with other chambers to create the MIDSTATE Chambers Coalition. The coalition represents 19 chambers of commerce in the mid section of

South Carolina and serves as a unified body to promote issues important to the growth and development of communities in the MIDSTATE region.

- **Invested in Technology to Improve Member Services:**  
Launched an Aiken Chamber mobile app to serve as a community business hub for the goods and services of Chamber members. Members also benefitted from 1.5 million hits on the Chamber website – [www.aikenchamber.net](http://www.aikenchamber.net).
- **Attained Accreditation with 5-Star Status:**  
The Chamber earned a 5-Star Accreditation from the US Chamber of Commerce to continue the Chamber's status of being the best of the best. Only 75 of 6,936 chambers nationwide currently hold this distinction. The 5-Star rating puts the Aiken Chamber in the top 1% of chambers in the U.S. The Aiken Chamber was originally accredited in 1995 and has maintained its accreditation status since that time. The organization was accredited again in 2000 and in 2006.
- **Attained National Recognition:**  
The Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce was ranked in the top three chambers of its size nationwide for its excellence in communications. The national Bronze award, presented by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), recognizes the Aiken Chamber and the 2010 issue of *Welcome Aiken* for meeting and exceeding the fundamental standards and criteria for communications excellence.
- **Received Statewide and Beyond Recognition:**  
Aiken's Makin' received four "Stars of the Carolinas" Excellence Awards at the South Carolina/North Carolina Annual ShowFest Convention in Greenville this past January. Only one SC award and one NC award were presented in each category below.
  - Best Volunteer/Volunteer Group award – Chamber Ambassadors
  - Sponsor of the Year award – Baker Concrete Construction
  - Director of the Year Award – Dianne Phillips
  - Best Print Media

These achievements of 2011 tell me that members, old and new, value our current direction of meeting their short-term needs while preparing for Aiken's economy of the future.

In looking forward, we project more successes for 2012. The Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce program of work provides numerous courses of action for the organization and several new initiatives to support our strategic plan.

With the guidance and support of an exceptional Board of Directors, motivated volunteers, and a dedicated professional staff, the Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce is poised to implement an aggressive plan of work for 2012.

As always, I appreciate your support of the Chamber.

With warmest personal regards,

J. David Jameson  
President / CEO

# Department Programming

## Public Affairs

Vice Chair, Public Affairs: Bart Blackwell; *B&S Machine Tool*

Director of Public Affairs and Operations: Cindy Delaney

The Public Affairs department of the Greater Aiken Chamber will work to build and diversify the economy by representing the interests of its membership at the local, state and federal levels of government.

Objectives:

1. Advocate issues of major importance to the community's economic vitality and quality of life along five core areas, including: government affairs, education, transportation, environment, and workforce development.
2. Develop programs, forums and events that will inform the business community and the general populace about issues impacting business and economic development.
3. Work with other chambers and businesses throughout the region to advocate on issues at the Federal level that impact the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA).

## New Initiatives for 2012

- Promote Aiken County's key initiatives to the MIDSTATE Chambers Coalition for the organization's 2012 legislative agenda. The Coalition serves as a unified body to promote a South Carolina legislative agenda that supports the interests of the business community in the Midstate region.
- Develop a Workforce Development plan that establishes the Chamber in a facilitator role with education and business that leads to a meaningful difference in workforce development for the region.
- Poll the membership to set priorities for the South Carolina Chamber's 2012 Competitiveness Agenda.

## Business and Community Development

Vice Chair, Business and Community Development: Deidre Martin, *USCA*

Director of Business and Community Development: Professional Staff

The Business and Community Development department of the Aiken Chamber will work to support business development and community initiatives that contribute to the economy and attract a diverse, demographically balanced population.

Objectives:

1. Build and diversify the economy by assisting Chamber members who own or manage small businesses to prosper and advance.
2. Support quality development and competitive advantage of Aiken for the growth of business and creation of jobs.
3. Create a pro-business atmosphere for current and future entrepreneurs.
4. Create new relationships and alliances to enhance existing community programs and efforts that contribute to the area's strengths and appeal.

### New Initiatives for 2012

- Grow and preserve the Equine Industry through the Equine Support Council by building upon current accomplishments:

International Horse Park – Upon receipt of private funding, conduct a feasibility study to be completed by Dr. Simon Hudson, director, Center of Economic Excellence in Tourism and Economic Development from the USC College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sports Management.

- Engage the community and coordinate with local government and other constituency groups to facilitate meaningful discussions on important issues in the community. Develop an implementation strategy for such discussion groups at the request of the Executive Committee
- Engage members to be more vocal on issues that affect business by conducting polls and holding roundtable discussions.

## Membership Services

Chair-Elect, Membership Services: Steve Wilson; *SRP Federal Credit Union*

Director of Membership Services: Heath Taylor

Director of Finance and Membership: Dianne Phillips

The Membership Services department of the Aiken Chamber will work to develop meaningful programs and services that respond to the needs of Chamber members and lead the Aiken Chamber to become a 'model' Chamber. The Chamber's membership base will be increased, as well as non-dues services.

Objectives:

1. Provide meaningful networking programs and services that deliver business leads for Chamber members.
2. Expand the membership base of the Chamber.
3. Increase non-dues revenue for the Chamber.

### **New Initiatives for 2012**

- Create an introductory event packet for new members with the goal of helping them understand the value of membership through networking and event/program participation.
- Poll the membership to identify their short- and long-term needs in order to grow successfully in the community.

## **Administrative**

Chair of the Board: Arthur W. (Buzz) Rich, *Attorney*  
Chamber President/CEO: J. David Jameson

The Administration of the Aiken Chamber will work to develop a 'model' chamber of commerce by maintaining and growing the Chamber's membership base and fiscal well being necessary to carry out the mission and objectives of the organization while ensuring the integrity of the chamber and the community.

Objectives:

1. Maximize the Chamber's fiscal integrity through the use of financial best practices and annual audits of quality records.
2. Prepare, implement and oversee the annual budget and program of work as developed from the Board of Directors annual planning session.
3. Review and evaluate current programs to determine if they are meeting established objectives and supporting the Chamber's strategic plan.
4. Review and evaluate all non-dues funding sources, including new funding sources.

## **New Initiatives for 2012**

- Develop a marketing plan by the end of the first quarter.
- Upgrade office technology by the end of the first quarter to improve delivery of services and enhance value to Chamber members – to include staff training and professional development.



## Ongoing Model Programs & Initiatives

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### Public Affairs

- State of Our Community Luncheon
- CSRA Leadership Trip to Washington, DC
- MIDSTATE Chambers Coalition
- Workforce Development
- New Educators Recognition
- Savannah River National Laboratory Advocacy
- Business Advocacy
- e-Guide to Government
- Competitiveness Agenda – South Carolina Chamber
- Cost of Living Index (The Council for Community and Economic Research)
- Chamber Web Enhancements, Sales, Maintenance
- Visitors Center Display Sales

### Administrative

- Annual Budget and Program of Work
- Financial Management
- Monthly Newsletter – Commerce Report and e-Commerce Report

### Business and Community Development

- Business Academy
- Women In Business Program
- Aiken Chamber Young Professionals
- Equine Support Council
- 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Aiken's Makin'
- Equine Performing Arts Series

### Membership Services

- 93<sup>rd</sup> Annual Dinner and Awards
- Membership Sales and Annual Campaign
- "Welcome Aiken" magazine with membership directory
- Monthly First Friday *Means* Business
- Monthly Business After Hours
- Ambassador Program
- SCORE – "Counselors to America's Small Business"
- Spring Golf Classic
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament
- Ribbon Cuttings & Grand Openings

## 2012 Board of Directors

### Executive Committee:

Arthur W. "Buzz" Rich, Chair; Attorney  
Steve Wilson, Chair-elect, SRP Federal Credit Union  
Cindy Meares, Secretary/Treasurer; Elliott Davis, LLC  
Bart Blackwell, Vice Chair Public Affairs, B&S machine Tool  
Deidre Martin, Vice Chair Business and Community Development; USCA  
Frank Thomas, Immediate Past Chair; Security Federal Bank  
J. David Jameson, President/CEO

### Board of Directors:

James (Jimmy) Angelos, URS Safety Management Solutions  
Sally Brodie, ERA Real Estate One  
Samantha Charles, Sidelines/Barn Book and Hatchaway Bridge Farms  
Dr. Gemma K. Frock, Aiken Technical College  
Carl Henson, MAU  
Joerg Klisch, Tognum America Inc.  
Chrissa Matthews, DayBreak Adult Care Services  
John McMichael, Hutson-Etherredge Companies  
Carlos Milanés, Aiken Regional Medical Centers  
Liz Neal, The Hills of Cumberland Village  
Ron Shepherd, UPS Supply Chain Solutions, Inc.  
Carl Smith, The Smith Group  
R. Clif Webb, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC

### Appointed Board Members:

Dr. Elizabeth Everitt, Aiken County Public Schools  
J. Clay Killian, County of Aiken  
Richard Pearce, City of Aiken  
Will Williams, Economic Development Partnership  
Tom Young, Jr., Attorney

### Chamber Professional Staff:

Mandy Collins, Information Services Coordinator  
Cynthia Delaney, Director, Public Affairs and Operations  
Dianne Phillips, Director, Finance & Membership Development  
Heath Taylor, Director, Membership Services  
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Gary Allington, Local Government Liaison  
Michael Lupfer, Director, Member Relations  
Edward (Ed) Scanlon, Manager, Equine Development  
Sherri Siler, Membership Account Executive