



2016 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN ALABAMA



BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN ALABAMA

BY TOM LITTLE & NANCY MANN JACKSON

How do you become one of the best companies out there? Many Alabama firms believe a good first step is becoming one of the best companies to work for — so that you have the opportunity to attract and hire the best potential employees — and keep them once you've got them.

This year, 16 firms have been honored as among the Best Companies to Work for in Alabama.

Edward Jones, an investment firm with an array of individually managed offices in towns across Alabama and the nation, topped the 2016 list for large companies. More than 300 people work for Edward Jones in Alabama. The company moved up from second place in both 2014 and 2015 to top the list this year.

Welch Hornsby, also a financial services firm, took top honors among small-to-medium firms. The Birmingham-based firm has 26 employees in Alabama.

The firms are ranked after an extensive review by Best Companies Group, which evaluates many aspects of the company culture — such as vacation and sick time, fitness facilities, chances for advancement, community engagement, training, telecommuting and business dress. Employees are surveyed about topics such as their ability to make suggestions or to feel that their contributions are appreciated.

Beyond the honor of being recognized as a great place to work, companies also get feedback from Best Companies so they can respond to any issues their

employees raise and move forward as a desirable workplace.

“We work hard to create a work environment that is meaningful and motivating to our associates and are especially proud when we are named a Best Company based on our associates' feedback,” says Edward Jones Regional Leader Jason Kozon. “We use the results to validate what is working well and identify areas of opportunity.”

Total Quality Logistics, or TQL, group sales manager Mackenzie Delsing, says: “Feedback from Best Companies surveys is extremely valuable to us. We are constantly taking our own pulse to find out what's working and what's not. Last year employees told us our maternity leave policy was outdated. The resulting parental leave policy gives new moms and dads paid time off upon the birth or adoption of a child. The Idea Bank on the Intranet welcomes any and all ideas from employees for making the company better.”

Consistent winner CTS Inc. finds the employee feedback from the Best Companies survey to be “incredibly valuable,” says CEO Larry Lilley. “We saw a big interest in service, so our community service week was a direct result of the survey info.”

“We've been focused on this for a number of years and we always respond in a positive and meaningful way, particularly where we see our employees telling us we can do better,” says Daniel Pittman, regional manager for the Southeast office

of Gray, a major construction firm. “We are nothing without our people, so they drive our desire to be better. This is a great process and has helped us maintain a tremendous work environment.”

Says Bill Conner, president and CEO at America's First Federal Credit Union: “If we see an area where employees have voiced a concern, we address it during our annual benefit review and try to modify or add benefits that will meet that need. Previous surveys told us that we needed to increase our training opportunities. Our new, multi-layered training programs have been a direct result of the Best Companies surveys.”

And Sandra Stenger, chief talent officer with Max Credit Union, says: “We're moving the needle in the right direction. It's good to see the changes we make lead to improvement.”

In the following pages, we introduce the top 16 companies in the 2016 Best Companies to Work for in Alabama.

Tom Little and Nancy Mann Jackson are freelance contributors to Business Alabama. Little is based in Birmingham and Jackson in Huntsville.

Previous Page Photos

Top, left: A team from Byars-Wright helps raise funds for the Salvation Army.

Top, right: The team from CTS, consistently ranked among Alabama's Best Companies to Work For.

Bottom: Wilkins-Miller employees are off to the Dragon Boat races.

“We work hard to create a work environment that is meaningful and motivating to our associates.”
— Jason Kozon of Edward Jones

“We are constantly taking our own pulse to find out what's working and what's not.”
— Mackenzie Delsing of TQL

“We're moving the needle in the right direction.”
— Sandra Stenger of Max Credit Union

BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN ALABAMA

SMALL-TO-MEDIUM SIZE COMPANIES (15-249 total company employees)

RANK	COMPANY	ALA. EXECUTIVE AND TITLE	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	WEBSITE	# OF ALA. EMPL.	INDUSTRY
1	Welch Hornsby Inc.	Edward Welch Jr. CEO & President	2000 SouthBridge Pkwy., Ste. 500 Birmingham, AL 35209	205-949-6040 205-949-6041	welchhornsby.com	26	Financial Services - Other
2	Wilkins Miller	W. Allen Carroll Jr. Managing Partner	P.O. Box 70047 Mobile, AL 36670	251-410-6767 251-410-6799	wilkinsmiller.com	56	Accounting
3	Alabama Credit Union	Steve Swofford CEO	P.O. Box 862998 Tuscaloosa, AL 35486	205-348-3369 205-348-7057	alabamacu.com	184	Banking
4	Byars-Wright Inc.	W. Haig Wright II President	P.O. Box 1309 Jasper, AL 35502	205-221-8664 205-295-9711	bryarswright.com	35	Insurance (non-healthcare)
5	Hartmann, Blackmon & Kilgore P.C.	Dennis Sherrin Managing Shareholder	806 N. Section St. Fairhope, AL 36532	251-928-2443 251-928-6921	hbkcpcas.net	44	Accounting
6	Premier Bank of the South	John Mullins President & CEO	P.O. Box 1708 Cullman, AL 35056	256-737-9900 256-739-4889	premierbank ofthesouth.com	74	Banking
7	White-Spunner Construction Inc.	John White-Spunner President	2010 W. I-65 Service Rd. S. Mobile, AL 36693	251-445-1717 251-445-0148	white-spunner.com	48	Construction
8	Bayer Properties LLC	Virginia Bridges VP, Human Resources	2222 Arlington Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205	205-795-4112 205-795-5597	bayerproperties.com	85	Real Estate

LARGE COMPANIES (250 or more total company employees)

RANK	COMPANY	ALA. EXECUTIVE AND TITLE	ADDRESS	PHONE/FAX	WEBSITE	# OF ALA. EMPL.	INDUSTRY
1	Edward Jones	Jason Kozon Regional Leader	22394 Mifflin Rd., Ste. 202 Foley, AL 36535	251-943-3399 502-426-0110	edwardjones.com	325	Financial Services - Other
2	Total Quality Logistics	Mackenzie Delsing Group Sales Manager	26000 Bass Pro Dr., Bldg. E200, Ste. 214 Spanish Fort, AL 36527	800-580-3101 513-248-5347	tql.com	55	Transportation
3	CTS Inc.	Larry Lilley CEO	300 Riverchase Pkwy. E. Birmingham, AL 35244	205-259-1221 205-259-2301	askcts.com	184	Technology
4	Gray (Southeast Regional Office)	Daniel Pittman Regional Manager, Southeast Office	2 N. 20th St., Ste. 100 Birmingham, AL 35203	205-380-1876 205-380-1819	gray.com	24	Construction
5	America's First Federal Credit Union	Bill Conner President & CEO	P.O. Box 11349 Birmingham, AL 35202	205-320-4048 205-325-3979	amfirst.org	317	Banking
6	MAX Credit Union	H. Greg McClellan President & CEO	P.O. Box 244040 Montgomery, AL 36124	334-215-4976 334-215-4983	mymax.com	326	Banking
7	Hargrove Engineers + Constructors	Chad Vinson Human Resources Director	20 S. Royal St. Mobile, AL 36602	251-375-5948	hargrove-epc.com	485	Engineering
8	Tower Loan	Charles Coleman Director of Operations	406 Liberty Park Ct. Flowood, MS 39232	601-992-0153 601-992-5086	towerloan.com	80	Financial Services - Other

BEST LARGE EMPLOYER: EDWARD JONES



Edward Jones is an investment and financial services company serving long-term investors with investment guidance and balancing portfolios. Based in St. Louis, Missouri, the company has nearly 42,000 financial advisors, branch office administrators and home-office associates across the U.S. and Canada.

In Alabama, Edward Jones employs 325 branch team members. Branch offices are kept intentionally small, with one financial advisor and at least one branch office administrator. This supports one-on-one communication in the office and enforces the company's values in both the individual and their relationships with clients and associates. "It shapes the way we do business every day," says spokesperson Ellen Wiederanders, "face-to-face service from the communities where our clients live and work."

Financial advisors may receive coaching from the company's Leadership Development Center in preparation for future career advancement. "Of firm principals, the majority started as financial advisors," says Wiederanders. "So this is

our most important leadership resource."

With an attitude of service and an emphasis on client satisfaction, senior staff work closely with team members toward shared goals. "We believe in creating winners without losers," says Wiederanders. "Every leader at Edward Jones is charged with helping the people for whom they are responsible succeed."

"Our regions are career-development factories," says Wiederanders. "Veterans help rookie financial advisors succeed, volunteer for leadership positions, then may be selected for regional leader, area leader, or region-based principal and home-office leadership roles."

Benefits include vision and dental, free wellness care with potential discounts, adoption and domestic partner benefits, tuition reimbursement, annual profit sharing, and 401(k) and Roth accounts with firm matching. Edward Jones self-funds medical care, allowing them to override provider decisions, order coverage or pay for expensive treatments.

Schedules and on-site work are flexible, as employees may take advantage

of compressed workweeks and telecommuting options. Hard work is recognized and rewarded. "In 2015, associates were eligible for top-level trimester bonuses due to excellent firm performance," says Wiederanders. "All associates are eligible to become limited partners and share in firm revenues. Half of all associates are now limited partners."

"Our firm was founded on the principle that the people who work for the firm are the source of its success," says Wiederanders. "That belief is responsible for many of the firm's practices, including sharing the profits with associates, a culture of caring that helps associates through personal and professional challenges, and offering partnership to those who demonstrate significant contributions to the firm."

The Edward Jones Region 268 Leadership Team gathered for its Summer Regional Meeting in June. The firm prides itself on helping employees advance toward leadership roles.

STANDOUTS AMONG ALABAMA'S LARGEST EMPLOYERS

TOTAL QUALITY LOGISTICS

Total Quality Logistics is a transportation logistics sales organization negotiating truck loads, rates and destinations between companies needing products hauled and truck carriers delivering goods. Last year, the high-energy company arranged the movement of more than 1 million loads of freight.

Founded in 1997, TQL has become the second largest freight brokerage firm in the country. The company operates more than 50 offices in 21 states, with more than 4,000 employees. TQL maintains a staff of 56 in Mobile.

The company puts a strong emphasis on employee appreciation, and takes every opportunity to recognize and celebrate success. "From a broker earning their first commission check to entire teams earning parties in our Best of the Best celebration, we celebrate the achievements that propel TQL forward," says Communications Specialist Colleen Berliner, "even personal successes like weddings or buying a new house."



TQL employees team up for a building project.

Employees also receive personal messages and congratulations via email from the CEO and the company's intranet page.

Executives keep an ear open for feedback and seek to better the work environment any way they can. "Whether it's the daily email from the CEO or an impromptu huddle, communication is constant," says Berliner. Company leaders routinely drop in to company branches, logging 85,700 miles visiting satellite offices last year.

"Employees get to know their leaders and not just their names," says Berliner.

"At our satellites, most office leaders have abandoned their walled office for the sales floor, preferring the higher level of accessibility."

TQL promotes from within, with more than 90 percent of sales leadership and management rising from other positions in the company. The Leadership Development Program caps off a long list of perks and benefits including unlimited commission opportunities, quarterly sales team rewards and specialized programs to support wellness and charitable endeavors.

CTS INC.

CTS Inc. is a southeastern software consulting firm applying creativity and diverse insight into four service lines: software development, business intelligence, quality assurance and application support, says CEO Larry Lilley. "Our entire universe is software."

The company employs 310 full-time personnel across six offices, the two largest being in Birmingham and Mobile. Lilley and company work to foster a culture of service at CTS, encouraging respect for all clients and employees. "The value of caring for each other is woven into everything we do," he says. To strengthen the sense of community at CTS, the company hosts regular team and family gatherings, including trips to see the Birmingham Barons and Mobile

BayBears.

In the midst of an accelerating industry, the company's executives understand the value of being transparent and available, he says. "We've enjoyed continued growth for 23 years," says Lilley, "but we had a humble start, just three guys in a basement. Remembering that helps us remain humble."

Staff can offer consistent feedback through regularly scheduled checkpoint meetings and reviews. CTS takes these opportunities to teach by example and prepare employees for advancement. "We try to promote from within whenever possible," says Lilley. "Employees will have mentors all along the way to help them move upward."

CTS offers multiple health insurance plans, with vision and full dental. The company can reimburse team members



Holiday-themed events are popular with CTS staffers.

seeking to continue their education, including the cost of books and other fees. Certification exams are covered, and CTS awards bonuses upon completion. Employees also enjoy a generous amount of paid vacation time. "From day one they get four weeks off per year," says Lilley. "They also get a paid week off for community service."



The Gray team after completing a Color Run.

GRAY

Gray Construction is a design-build firm providing domestic and international customers with architecture, engineering and construction services. Their portfolio includes massive retail and manufacturing facilities from the Carolinas to Hawaii, as well as the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama.

Gray employs 720 nationally, with 19 team members in the Birmingham office. All company disciplines are conducted

in house in a collaborative environment. “The fact that no one at Gray has an office or cubicle creates a very open and interactive work experience,” says COO Brian Jones, “which builds a great deal of trust and openness while also reducing intimidation. Everyone feels like they are part of the bigger picture.”

Jones believes that a willingness to take risks and experiment keeps the company’s leadership modest. “We operate with an entrepreneurial spirit, so mistakes are expected, not condemned,” he says,

“which is encouraging as team members develop professional skills and learn from opportunities.”

That attitude of continuous improvement through bold ventures is encouraged throughout the company and opens the door for advancement. “Highly motivated people thrive in our fast-paced work environment,” says Jones. “We all learn from each other and help one another along the way.” Training programs like Gray University help team members break into new areas beyond their starting expertise.

In addition to a variety of insurance benefits, Gray offers paid time off, tuition reimbursement, a college savings plan and adoption assistance. In 2011, Gray established an employee stock ownership plan. The company is now 30 percent employee-owned.

This summer, Gray’s Alabama team will relocate to a new Southeast Regional Office on Third Avenue North in Birmingham. “This is exciting as it signifies the growth that Gray has experienced in Birmingham, as well as the redevelopment of downtown,” says Jones.

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Some numbers to feel good about:

- 65,000 MEMBERS**
- 5 STAR BAUER RATING**
- 4 Years One of the Best Companies to Work For in Alabama**

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AMERICA'S FIRST FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

America's First Federal Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial co-operative that offers a wide range of financial services.

With a staff of 340, the Birmingham-based credit union invests heavily in its team members with a variety of incentives, benefits and rewards. "In order to give our members the best service possible, we need to have engaged employees who have the right tools and opportunities available to them," says Chief Human Resource Officer Audra Weber. "We know that we are only as good as our employees are, so we put a lot of emphasis and resources towards the professional development of our staff."

Employees can hone their current skills and learn new ones through a variety of training programs, including ones that lead toward branch management, says Weber.

America's First emphasizes community involvement, including incentives for volunteer work. "Not only do our employees raise money for our charities, they also volunteer their time in the community, which is made possible by America's First allotting paid time off to each employee, every year, to help those in need," says Weber. This year, America's First team members served Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, the Autism Society of Alabama and Red Mountain Park.

Staff also receive feedback and coaching through both company-wide and one-on-one meetings with management. "Managers and employees are encouraged to create development plans to help employees obtain the positions they are interested in," says Weber. Employees are also able to directly reach the CEO with suggestions or concerns.

America's First offers coverage for health, dental and vision, as well as telehealth, EAP, and Life/AD&D insurance. Other benefits include vacation and sick time, volunteer hours, paid holidays, tuition reimbursement, retiree benefits and alternate work schedules.



Monopoly sets the theme for an event at America's First Federal Credit Union.

Co-workers shake hands.
Teammates **HIGH FIVE.**



We are honored to be selected as one of the **2016 Best Companies to Work For in Alabama.** But, the real congratulations (and epic high five) goes to our employees. Thank you for making hb&k a great place to work for more than 25 years!



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MAX CREDIT UNION

MAX Credit Union is a full-service financial institution offering checking and savings accounts, loans and other banking and insurances services. Originating from a collaboration of Maxwell Air Force Base airmen in 1955, the Montgomery-based credit union now has a staff of 320.

From the beginning, MAX has valued integrity and cooperation among its members and staff. “Our leadership holds themselves and everyone to those standards,” says Lynette Cupps, VP of organizational development. “And they genuinely invest in our people. Anybody can have a job, go to work and put in their time, but all the extra makes being here special. The encouragement, the

benefits and the volunteerism make you feel valuable.”

Executives are present at staff events and remain involved to see regular operations first-hand. They also check in with team members during the company’s Breaking Ground coffee meetings. “We really wanted to hear honest feedback from everyone here,” says Sandra Stenger, chief talent officer. “We created our Corporate Communications Department to open up the dialogue throughout the whole company.” MAX has also incorporated new recognition efforts to celebrate success whenever it occurs. “Our goal is to create a culture of gratitude,” says Stenger.

Staff at MAX ranges from long-established team members to millennials

entering the workforce. “We’re able to facilitate collaboration between different ages and levels of experience,” says Stenger. “Everyone has something to learn, and we’re constantly looking for new ways to grow with upcoming generations, as well as new technology.”

Team members have the opportunity to move within the company as they develop their skills and experience. “Showing initiative is always rewarded,” says Cupps. “We play to your strengths and make sure you’re in the right position.”

Along with healthcare coverage and a 401(k), employee benefits include a wellness program with special incentives like a Fitbit competition.

HARGROVE ENGINEERS + CONSTRUCTORS

Hargrove Engineers + Constructors is a full-service engineering, procurement and construction management firm, specializing in controls and automation, life sciences and technical services. Founded in Mobile in 1995, the company now has 11 offices around the nation, including two more Alabama locations in Decatur and Birmingham. Of Hargrove’s 1,200 employees, 500 work in the state.

“Hargrove stands out in the business because of our emphasis on the team, our dedication to being proactive not reactive, and being driven to compete and win,” says Human Resources Director Chad Vinson. “We’ve been told by our clients that it is Hargrove’s modest, confident swagger and the cohesiveness of the Hargrove team that bonds us together by the intangible desire to support each other and our teammates on the client’s side.”

Management is available for regular meetings and values face-to-face interaction. “Hargrove’s leadership shares a strong work ethic across the board and makes an effort to impact teammates through leadership training, safety meetings and other face-to-face interaction,” says Vinson. “They have an open door policy, which allows all teammates to make their voices heard. Hargrove equips



Team Hargrove gathers for the 2016 Mobile Kidney Walk.

teammates with the right tools and training and makes sure they feel empowered to make the right decisions.”

Beyond two medical plan options, Hargrove offers dental and vision plans, a company-paid life benefit, as well as the option to purchase additional life for

teammates and dependents. Employees also have access to telemedicine services, legal assistance, critical illness and accident plans, pre-tax spending accounts, wellness plans, stock ownership plan and a company chaplain.

TOWER LOAN

Tower Loan is among America's largest privately owned consumer finance companies, with more than 200 offices around the U.S. For more than 70 years, the company has financed personal loans and retail sales, now serving more than 200,000 customers.

Tower Loan supports more than 800 employees with special training programs and encourages advancement through the company. "We offer a unique manager trainee program," says Lynne Card, director of human resources. "Manager trainees are given formal training for one year under an experienced branch manager. Once training is completed, manager trainees are promoted to manage their own branch."

After the initial program is complete, additional avenues for success will open to employees. "All manager trainees have the opportunity to be on the fast track to management through our manager trainee program," says Card. "Branch managers have the opportunity to be promoted to supervisors and directors of



The Tower Loan team.

operations."

In addition to designated training plans, employees interact directly with management on a daily basis, addressing any issues or questions that may arise. "We make sure to give consistent feedback in order to grow our staff," says Card. "Our company's leaders and all other employees hold themselves to a standard of being firm but fair, maintaining high ethical standards and growing

the next generation of leaders through training and support."

Tower Loan offers group health insurance with options for dental, life and vision. Other benefits include paid time off and paid holidays, 401(k), monthly incentive pay and access to condos in Gulf Shores and Destin. Employees also have entry to skybox seats to see their local sports teams, including the Braves and Saints.

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BEST SMALL-MEDIUM EMPLOYER: WELCH HORNSBY



Founded in 1988, Welch Hornsby is a fee-only investment advisory firm with offices in Montgomery, Birmingham and Charlotte, North Carolina. As a fee-only firm, Welch Hornsby is compensated only by its clients and not by investment companies, eliminating conflicts of interest.

“Within our personal wealth business, we organize our clients’ financial lives, helping them to connect everything from their portfolio, insurance, estate planning and many other personal financial planning items,” says Edward Welch Jr., president and CEO. “On the institutional group, we act as fiduciaries for our clients, providing them investment advice on how to structure their portfolios or retirement plans for their participants and beneficiaries.”

Edward Welch Sr. and John Hornsby founded the firm with the philosophy that the client’s interest should never be compromised. Almost three decades later,

Welch Hornsby has more than \$3.5 billion in assets and has become one of the region’s largest investment advisory firms.

In 2016, the firm won top honors as the Best Company to Work For in Alabama in the small and medium group.

Leaders attribute their success to a team of dedicated employees, and in turn, they work to provide an outstanding workplace for those employees. “We have truly committed people, people who have bought into our mission of an uncompromising commitment to build and preserve the wealth of our clients, to enrich their lives, the lives of our employees and the world in which we live,” Welch says.

Employees at Welch Hornsby receive competitive pay and benefits, but that’s not all. They enjoy a flexible working environment with opportunities for working remotely, as well as quarterly staff luncheons and highly popular holiday parties outside the office. The company’s wellness

program sponsors creative Fitbit challenges and employees are invited to bring their families to events, such as a firm-sponsored play at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival or an annual Birmingham Barons baseball game.

“We think it is the small things which make them want to stay and grow with us,” Welch says. “From our wellness program competitions, support with tuition and professional development, lunches together, a collaborative environment of sharing ideas and a team effort in delivering the highest quality services to our clients, all of these we believe create a great environment for our employees and their professional development.”

Welch Hornsby employees work as a team on adventures like a Breakout challenge or just supporting their team and celebrating successes.

STANDOUTS AMONG SMALL-MEDIUM EMPLOYERS

WILKINS MILLER

The largest accounting and advisory firm in the Mobile Bay area, Wilkins Miller provides audit, accounting, tax and consulting services. Its services include wealth management, information technologies, financial reporting, litigation services and valuation.

Not only has Wilkins Miller focused for more than 50 years on providing top-notch services to clients, but the firm has also focused on building a flexible, respectful, enjoyable working environment for its team members. For instance, positive reinforcement and words of encouragement are the norm, from the executive office and throughout all levels of the team. During tax season, employees are paired up with “tax fairies,” similar to secret pals, and on each Thursday of busy season, tax fairies give employees notes, snacks, acts of kindness or something fun to keep the busy season enjoyable. On Fridays during busy season, the firm sends out a Spotify playlist curated by a staff member and provides fresh fruit in the break room.



Wilkins Miller staff members enjoy getting outside-the-office fun gatherings — including laser tag.

In addition, Wilkins Miller employees enjoy opportunities for flex time and generous vacation time. They regularly gather for office happy hours, with food, drinks and music at 3 p.m. And throughout the year, they celebrate together with a tax season party, summer picnic, Halloween party, potlucks, Christmas party and other tax season perks.

“We provide a family atmosphere where team members are valued and treat each other with respect and compassion,” says Allen Carroll Jr., managing partner. “We love to have fun and enjoy getting out of the office to spend time together. We have a fantastic team that makes for a great work environment.”

ALABAMA CREDIT UNION

Alabama Credit Union is a not-for-profit financial cooperative with a mission to serve the financial needs of its members. And leaders believe that members will be served better by employees who feel good about their careers.

“We approach the idea of employment as part of a greater system: Work, family and community success are all dependent on one another,” says Steve Swofford, CEO. “A great culture doesn’t just happen accidentally. It takes years of earnest and consistent messaging to employees to create an environment of trust and fun.”

At Alabama Credit Union, leaders focus on making sure that employees have opportunities to develop their profession-

al and personal skills, give back to their communities, and get paid while doing it, “ultimately making them feel good about their lives,” Swofford says.

Employees enjoy generous time off, profit sharing, a wellness program and paid time to volunteer for the charity of their choice. But for most employees, the selling point is the opportunity to provide contributions through high-performance team initiatives, Swofford says.

“We recognize that employees are in the best positions to generate ideas and implement initiatives that are realistic for those who carry out the functions, so we put a structure in place for employees to have opportunities to work on strategic initiatives,” Swofford says. “If an employee wants to work on a project of strategic significance to Alabama Credit Union, opportunities for this constantly exist as



Volunteering together outside the office builds a stronger team inside the office.

we innovate to better serve our members. Then they get to celebrate their success and enjoy recognition as organizational contributors.”

BYARS WRIGHT INC.

Founded in 1946, Byars Wright Inc. is an independent insurance agency with offices in Jasper and Gardendale. “We protect what people work hard to accomplish in both their family life and business,” says Haig Wright II, president of the company.

Just as Byars Wright works to make life better for its clients, it also endeavors to do the same for its employees. “We offer a family-focused environment that provides a work-life balance and Christian values,” Wright says. “This is reflected in our customer service. As the company grows, efforts of the employees are recognized with a rewarding bonus structure.”

In addition to extra compensation, employees enjoy perks such as generous time off, holiday and appreciation lunches, and tickets to Birmingham Barons baseball games.

“At Byars Wright, we believe in equipping our employees with what they need to flourish both personally and professionally,” Wright says. “State licensure and required continuing education are necessary elements to be successful in this industry. This knowledge is then utilized to better serve our customer.”

“We believe in equipping our employees with what they need to flourish both personally and professionally.”
 — Haig Wright II, Byars Wright Inc.

HARTMANN, BLACKMON & KILGORE PC

A professional services firm, Hartmann Blackmon & Kilgore (hb&k) focuses on assisting businesses and individuals in preparing for the future by providing strategic consulting, team building, assurance services, business financial management and tax compliance services.

Employees at hb&k enjoy a laid back, comfortable atmosphere. For instance, Fridays are for wearing blue jeans, and from May to September, the office closes at 1 p.m. on Fridays. Together, the team celebrates each other’s personal milestones, such as weddings and new babies. The firm also hosts holiday parties and other gatherings and events for employees and their families.

With a unique focus on people, hb&k leaders appreciate the differences each individual team member brings and look for ways to use individual talents to benefit each employee and the firm.

“We challenge the status quo of the accounting profession, realizing the ways of the past will not work tomorrow,” says Dennis Sherrin, managing shareholder. “The phrase, ‘This is how we have always done it,’ is just not in our vocabulary. Firm leadership recognizes it is not perfect and continuously works to improve the quality of our work environment.”

To continually improve, the firm regularly invests in internal programs, activities and initiatives, which are always employee-led. “Providing a work environment where employees offer significant input in the direction of the business is a top priority,” Sherrin says.

A TEAM THAT
KEEPS
BUILDING

At Gray Construction, our team members continue to go above and beyond, turning the ideas of our customers into exceptional buildings.

Our Southeast office is beyond thankful to have such a dedicated team who make Gray one of the Best Companies to Work for in Alabama.






gray.com

PREMIER BANK OF THE SOUTH

Since 1987, Premier Bank of the South has been providing banking and financial services to residents and businesses throughout North Alabama. The bank operates offices in Cullman, Madison, Morgan and Winston counties.

Employees across the bank's footprint enjoy a safe, pleasant working environment and a number of perks. For instance, through Premier Bank's KSOP retirement plan, employees receive company stock to match their own contributions. At customer appreciation days, bank employees enjoy getting out of the office for themed cookouts. They also participate in employee contests and have opportunities to take employee exercise classes.

"In all of our efforts as an organization, we strive to implement our employees' ideas and suggestions," says John J. Mullins, president and CEO. "We strive to give our employees a workplace that is based on a family-friendly atmosphere, as well as a professional setting. We try to address every need to the best of our ability that any employee might have."

**"In all our efforts as an organization, we strive to implement our employees' ideas and suggestions."
— John Mullins, Premier Bank of the South**

WHITE-SPUNNER CONSTRUCTION INC.

Based in Mobile, White-Spunner Construction is a general contracting, design-build and construction management firm. The firm focuses on retail and grocery, multifamily and mixed-use, hospitality, health care, education, industrial and more, including historic redevelopment and LEED building.

Founded in 1981, White-Spunner is currently celebrating 35 years of providing construction services with a commitment to safety, quality and integrity.

"We take great pride in the work we do for our clients, as well as our commitment to our employees and the community," says John White-Spunner, president and CEO. "Throughout the years, our company has worked to become not just a great place to work, but a place for our employees to call home.

"We build each other up during hard times, and we hold each other accountable in our daily actions. Our aim is to create a working environment in which our employees feel appreciated as a valued member of our team."

Because leaders believe the company's success is defined by its collaborative culture and dedicated workforce, and that its greatest strength is its employees, White-Spunner Construction is committed to the individual success, health and wellbeing of its team. The company offers a generous and comprehensive benefits package including fully paid insurance options, as well as matching 401k, employee bonuses and incentive programs.

Corporate facilities include on-site fitness center and wellness pantry, wellness initiatives, tuition reimbursements and training plans.



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BAYER PROPERTIES LLC

Based in Birmingham, Bayer Properties specializes in developing, leasing, managing and marketing mixed-use real estate properties across the country. The company currently owns or operates 10 million square feet of retail and office properties, including The Summit

in Birmingham; Mount Pleasant Town Centre in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina; The Summit in Reno, Nevada; and The Summit at Fritz Farm in Lexington, Kentucky. Bayer Properties is also redeveloping the historic Pizitz Building in downtown Birmingham into a mixed-use, urban revitalization project opening in late 2016.

Not only do Bayer employees get to help set trends in the area of mixed-use

real estate, but they also enjoy a number of perks. For instance, Fridays are always early-off days, with the office closing at 4 p.m. most of the year and 3 p.m. during the summer. During the Christmas holiday season, leaders give employees extra time off, usually four or five extra days. The office also provides “ice cream Fridays” during the summer, pizza lunches during March Madness and the World Cup, and a weekly food truck vendor. In addition, employees have the option to work flexible hours to fit their personal schedules.

“Bayer provides a positive, energetic and enjoyable work environment,” says Virginia Bridges, vice president of human resources. “Our leaders are accessible and always open to new ideas and discussions with associates. Bayer maintains a sense of community. Our leaders make every effort to inspire and support employees in accomplishing their goals.”



Bayer Properties works “to inspire and support employees in accomplishing their goals,” says VP of Human Resources Virginia Bridges.

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