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Years



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TABLE of CONTENTS

Let's Start at The Very Beginning	6
Small Town, Big Dreams	12
Our Roots Run Deep	18
Leading the Charge	30
What's in a Name?	36
Fred J. Boscarino	44
Entrepreneurial Academy	47
Leadership Rockdale Leaves You Wanting More	51
Lending a Hand, Leaving a Legacy	55
A Place to Call Home	60
Our Chamber Volunteers are Rock Solid	61
Benefits of Membership	62
Index of Advertisers	70

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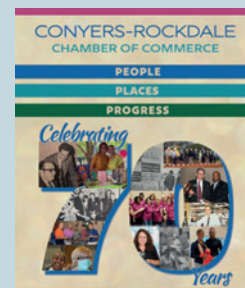
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Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce

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to as "the red book" and The Heritage of Rockdale
County, GA, published in 1998 and referred to as
the "blue book," were very helpful resources for
historical content.





Craig W. Johnson, Chairman
2023 Board of Governors

Happy Anniversary!

Celebrating 70 Years of
People, Places, and Progress



Steve Bromell, Chairman
2024 Board of Governors

When we celebrate milestone birthdays or anniversaries, we tend to get a bit nostalgic. We think about the days gone by, the people who've impacted our lives, the ups and downs we've faced, and we wonder what the future will bring. We shake our heads and think how quickly time has flown. We reflect on our successes, and we struggle to remember the difficult times as we now see these experiences as valuable lessons. We recognize the changes that time has brought. Time has a way of giving us the gift of perspective.

Likewise, when we celebrate a milestone anniversary in the life of a business, we reflect upon our origins. We remember the people who shaped our organization, contributed to our successes, and guided us throughout the years.

We look back at the evolution of this place we call home. We commemorate the progress we have made. In 2024, the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce reaches a remarkable milestone anniversary – 70 years serving the businesses and people of Conyers/Rockdale County. And we remember the People, Places, and Progress.

PEOPLE

We honor the many people who have been a part of our story – our visionary founders, dedicated Chamber members and staff, resolute community leaders and citizens – whose collective efforts have nurtured our growth and shaped our journey.

PLACES

The Chamber's success story is intertwined with the places in our community where we live, work, and play. From retail and manufacturing to entertainment and eating establishments, from small mom and pop shops to corporate headquarters, from education to recreation and more, these places connect us by fostering meaningful relationships, lifelong friendships, and invaluable partnerships.

PROGRESS

Progress, growth, and innovation for this community and the people who live and/or work here has been the driving force of our evolution these past 70 years. Embracing change, adaptability, and forward-thinking strategies, we have continually sought industry advancements, new technologies, networking opportunities, and leadership development activities to remain relevant and resilient in an ever-evolving landscape.

For 70 years, the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce has endeavored to foster an exceptional quality of life in Conyers/Rockdale County. We will continue to spotlight people, places, and progress as our legacy for future generations.

*We are the Conyers-Rockdale
Chamber of Commerce!*

Let's start at the *very beginning...*



Chamber leadership attend the signing of the closing documents for the completion of the Warren-Sherer land purchase for the construction of the Kysor Industrial Corporation's Warren-Sherer Refrigeration Conyers Plant. Seated left to right are A.R. "Gus" Barksdale, Roger D. Jacobs, and Joe Lefkoff. Standing left to right are Norman Smith, Bill Law, James Culpepper, Leonard Venable and Wash Falk, III.



Raymond Davis, Jr., hired in 1972 as the executive director of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce, receives a congratulatory handshake from Chamber president, A.R. "Gus" Barksdale.

"Local Chamber of Commerce Discussed May 13"

read a headline on the front page of the local newspaper, *The Conyers News*, on April 23, 1954. The article stated, "All Rockdale County Citizens are requested to bear in mind that there will be a mass meeting in the county courthouse on Thursday, May 13, at 8 p.m., to discuss the organization of a Conyers-Rockdale County Chamber of Commerce."

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Speaking earlier that week to the Lions Club, A.R. “Gus” Barksdale was quoted in *The Conyers News* as saying, “The mass meeting is for the purpose of forming a permanent organization. Membership is open to all persons, business concerns, associations, industrial plants, and others.” (As is membership in the Chamber today.)

Three weeks later, more than 80 local citizens as well as representatives from the Georgia and U.S. Chambers of Commerce crowded into the courthouse to attend the organizational meeting. “Practically every firm in the county was represented including the City Council,” commented Jack Turner, one of the Chamber founders. The vision – the industrial development of the area – was discussed, Jack Turner was elected President, and the first regular meeting was set for the following Tuesday, May 18, 1954.



Uniroyal Tires Conyers Plant circa 1960

Conyers-Rockdale County Chamber of Commerce

Annual Dues Schedule - May 18, 1954

Chairman of the Membership Committee:
Dr. Ralph Beasley

Memberships may be placed at the Chamber headquarters, Beasley's Drug Store or at C.E. Steele Hardware.

Individual members
\$6 per year

Businesses with 1 to 3 full-time employees
\$30 per year

Businesses with 4 to 8 full-time employees
\$40 per year

Businesses with more than 8 full-time employees
\$50 per year



Guests at the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce meeting on May 13, 1971, listen to updates on Chamber accomplishments and goals.

At its inaugural business meeting, the newly formed organization elected additional officers, named a Board of Directors and committee chairs, established a dues structure, and began the work of expanding industrial opportunities in the area.

The additional officers were Charlie Rich, vice president, and C.E. Steele, secretary/treasurer. The Board of Directors included representatives from the four rural districts of the county: Charlie Rich, Milstead; Ralph Richardson, Lorraine; J.W. Smith, Sheffield; and W. J. Parr, Honey Creek. There were also eight Conyers businessmen: Eli Walker, Harry Hutson, James C. Mann, A. R. "Gus" Barksdale, Ralph Beasley, R.H. Still, C.E. Steele, and H.E. Griggs.

In less than six months, Chamber membership was approaching 135 businesses and individuals. The office of the Mid-Georgia Gas Company, where Turner served as Manager, was designated as the Chamber's headquarters.



A.R. "Gus" Barksdale, President of the Conyers-Rockdale County Chamber of Commerce, and Pat Shafer of Southern Bell announce plans for a "good usage" clinic for area businesses.

Nearly 70 years later, the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce is still working to support industrial opportunities. However, the Chamber has expanded its vision over the years to focus on people and programs by being an advocate for a pro-business community, developing networking opportunities, supporting small business through special programs and training sessions, and making connections with government entities, non-profit groups, faith-based organizations, and local citizens. The Chamber seeks to promote progress and enhance the quality of life in this place we call home – Conyers/Rockdale County.

Membership Roster

- W.L. McCart
- Bentley Adams
- Vaughn & Barksdale
- Gailey Dry Goods
- Mid-Ga Gas Company
- Georgia Power Company
- Economy Auto
- A.C. Young Appliance Company
- S.C. Hornbuckle
- Bennetts Store
- Walker - Owens
- D.R. Hall
- Ralph Cornwell
- W.S. Hicks
- Conyers Motor Company
- E.T. Hicks Jr.
- Pacific Overall Company
- Beasley Drug Company/
R.D. Beasley
- Idus P. Piper Jr.
- Hicks Still Coal &
Lumber Company
- Rockdale Cleaners
- J.E. McClelland Garage
- Dovie Hull Beauty Shop
- Lewis Kent
- Henson Furniture Company
- Lewis Gardner
- Mrs. R.B. Elliott
- Rev. Olif Barfield
- Jackson Jewelry
- A.M. Lucas
- A.M. Bennett
- Mrs. Fannie Freeman
- V.E. Harper
- Walker-Warren Drug Company
- Bank of Rockdale
- Smith Feed & Seed
Company
- Freeman Brothers
- Hardeman Grocery
- Bowen Grocery
- Conyers Dry Cleaners
- Conyers Coca-Cola
Company
- McMichael Service Station
- Conyers Theatre
- C.N. Morrison
- Texas Motor Court
(H.G. Jensen)
- Dewey Mitchell Garage
- Parr's Store
- W.J. Parr
- Clifford Lucas
- Gordan Puckett
- Bennetts Barbecue
- Mark Norton
- G.D. Malcom
- W.H. Brisendine
- Dr. George Israel
- Rockdale Hardware
- Almond Variety Store
- C.R. Vaughn Sr.
- T.H. Barksdale
- Martin Stores
- Dean Cooper
- Hutson Manufacturing
Company (H.E. Hutson,
Martin Hurst, W.R. Hutson,
J.M. Brantley)
- Steel Hardware and
Electric Company
- C.E. Steele
- Ed L. Cowan

More than 100 strong!

First Chamber Members

The new Chamber of Commerce sparked excitement in the community. Within two months, the young Chamber had more than 100 members – individuals and businesses alike. In a July 16, 1954, article in *The Conyers News*, Chamber President Jack Turner is quoted as saying, “We are well pleased with the progress. ... We feel the response has been most gratifying.”

A complete list of members (some of whom are still members today) was published on October 10, 1954. Below is the roster of the original Chamber members as they were listed in the newspaper. In this issue, Turner said, “The committees are working every day toward the development of Rockdale County.” He continued to urge more citizens to get involved.

October 1954

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Harry L. White
Funeral Home | • A.D. Aradwell |
| • Hal D. Austin | • J.H. Bradford |
| • C.C. Walker | • N.W. Moore |
| • Ernest D. Holmes | • Carl L. Butler |
| • Mann Funeral Home | • J.W. Smith |
| • The Handy Store (F.V. Kent) | • Buford Smith |
| • Fred Davis Motor Company | • R.H. Underwood |
| • Ralph Richardson Store | • Tom Reeves |
| • W.A. Toney | • L.E. Pirkle |
| • Roy Maffet | • Randolph Leach |
| • Mack Pierce Garage | • Lake Rockaway |
| • E.F. and Delmus Reagan Shop | • L.C. Sanders Store |
| • E.W. Crowe | • Mrs. F. Underwood |
| • The Conyers News | • Dr. H.E. Griggs |
| • Harold Reagin | • Mrs. H.E. Griggs |
| • Thacker Motor Company | • Dr. J.C. Brown |
| • William T. Dean | • Dr. R.M. Martin |
| • Carl Ray Store | • Dillard Barber Shop |
| • Roy Richardson | • Bob H. Elliott |
| • Clyde Treadwell | • John D. Humphries |
| • Jack Perry | • Colonial Stores, Inc. |
| • James C. Mann | • Satterfield Grocery |
| • Mann-Ray Gin | • The Citizens Observer |
| • Farmers Union
Warehouse Company | • LaZelle Florist |
| • Moody S. Nix | • Nelley's Shoe Shop |
| • L.F. McCalla | • H.C. Eddleman, Jr. |
| • Blue Ribbon Inn | • H.H. Elliott |
| • Gas Inc. - James R. Norton | • L.B. Veal |
| • Callaway Mills Company | • H.L. Chandley |
| • Fred D. Carlisle | • James C. Miller Jr. |
| • C.J. Hicks | • Conyers Automatic Wash |
| • G.M. Moody | • Jack Jennings |
| • P.A. Tribble | • W.U. Bowen |
| • HR Chriswell | • Standard Oil Company |
| • W.A. Doyle | • Sigman Furniture
Company |



Dean Cooper's Grocery Store circa 1950



*Then and now . . .
R.D. Beasley, Chamber
founding member and
treasurer and owner of
Beasley Drug Company,
and his granddaughter,
Ora Bailey, current owner
and Chamber member.*



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CONGRATULATIONS

Conyers Rockdale Chamber of Commerce

70 YEARS

Thank you for your diligent leadership, dedicated service and valuable contributions to our community.

We are proud to be a part of this steadfast organization.



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EASTMORE
[EastmoreGA.com](https://www.EastmoreGA.com)

Small Town Big Dreams



Above: Conyers Taxi Service, circa early 1950s

Below: Passenger rail service ran from Atlanta to Augusta from 1891 to 1972 stopping at the Conyers Depot.



*Living life in 1950s
Conyers/Rockdale
County seemed easy.*

A small town, families could enjoy a quiet lifestyle, while still experiencing the more modern amenities of the big city down the road. Small farms dotted the landscape, Callaway Mills, Rockdale County's largest business, was operating in Milstead and employing many local citizens, and the City of Conyers, situated on the busy railroad, was thriving.



Conyers Christmas Parade, circa mid-1920s.

Residents visited downtown Conyers for shopping at primarily family-owned stores selling dry goods, hardware, furniture, clothing, shoes, jewelry, and so much more. This busy area included a movie theater, post office, two hotels, dry cleaners, taxi service, and a variety of repair shops as well as other services. Families were growing, and more were moving into the area. Change in the form of growth and development for Rockdale County was imminent.

Recognizing the need to make the anticipated progress orderly, a visionary group of businessmen established the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce in 1954. Expanding economic opportunities provided the incentive and many of the Chamber's original organizers had just experienced some success with growing industry in Rockdale County, so the timing was right. Prior to establishing the Chamber, about 15 to 20 local businessmen had raised money to build a new plant to house the Pacific Overall Company that had outgrown its original location. This success, combined with the area's proximity to Atlanta, access to the railroad, and a growing labor force, likely propelled the Chamber's early accomplishments.

The newly established Chamber board and, specifically, the members of the Industrial Committee, led by A.R. "Gus" Barksdale, immediately got to work. The first industry secured by the Chamber was the Kaiser Aluminum Company Warehouse, which broke ground on May 24, 1956. The



Mr. Gailey Summers stands in front of the popular Gailey's Dry Goods store, circa 1942. Gailey's opened its doors in Conyers in 1899 and was sold in 1979.

members predicted that many more industries would choose to locate in Conyers/Rockdale County – and they were right!

The Chamber's executive team understood that to entice new industry to the area, Conyers/Rockdale needed an industrial park. Soon after beginning operations, the Chamber purchased 28 acres to be used for industrial expansion on the west side of town near Rockdale Industrial Boulevard. The Pattillo Construction Company built the industrial buildings. A group within the Chamber purchased additional land between West Avenue and VFW Drive for even more industrial expansion.



Leaders from the Chamber, Community, and State prepare to break ground on the first new building in the Pattillo Industrial Development in Conyers/Rockdale County.

When executives at Lithonia Lighting, a manufacturer of lighting fixtures, which began in the neighboring city of Lithonia in 1946, decided they wanted a location for a new plant, they first applied to a group of Covington businessmen. The company was unable, however, to get the local support necessary and were consequently turned down. Forward-thinking members of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce seized this opportunity and contacted the company themselves.

On August 30, 1956, the Chamber launched a fund-raising drive to finance a building for Lithonia Lighting. Rockdale County citizens gave the Chamber their wholehearted support by purchasing subordinated debentures in the amount of \$500. The building, which cost approximately \$750,000, was completed in 1957 and remains operational in Rockdale County.

The addition of Lithonia Lighting proved to be an excellent investment for this community. Callaway Mills,

"The purpose of the new organization (the Conyers-Rockdale County Chamber of Commerce) is to invite and encourage new industry to settle in Rockdale County and to develop the county from an industrial standpoint."

***The Conyers News
Friday, April 23, 1954***

which employed around 900 people, closed in 1960. At least one third of its employees were citizens of Rockdale County. Most of these out-of-work employees were absorbed by Lithonia Lighting, relieving what could have been an unemployment crisis. Lithonia Lighting is today a part of Acuity Brands, one of the world's leading providers

of lighting and building management solutions.

This event reinforced the significance of growing business and industry in Conyers/Rockdale County. Within five years of operation, the Chamber had successfully facilitated the addition of six new industries into the area. The 1960s saw even more growth with the opening of Interstate 20 and the addition of at least 14 new industries, many of which remain in our community today. For the next 30 years, industrial and manufacturing growth in Conyers/Rockdale County continued at a steady pace with the Chamber leading the charge as more and more industries and manufacturers discovered the unique attributes of Conyers/Rockdale County.



Above: Lithonia Lighting workers constructing lighting fixtures, circa 1959

Inset: Drafting table and machinery at Lithonia Lighting

Right: An employee at Evans Tool & Die demonstrates how to stamp from a die-cutting machine. Evans relocated to Conyers/Rockdale County from DeKalb County in 1978.





Leaders gather for a groundbreaking ceremony at the Dinky (April 2019) welcoming Hargray Fiber (now Clearwave Fiber) to Conyers/Rockdale County.

With the new millennium on the horizon, the city and county governments worked closely with the Chamber to facilitate opportunities for economic development. They recognized that as Georgia's second smallest county in terms of land mass, future industrial and commercial development might be limited and present new challenges and opportunities. Many conversations and strategic approaches to continue economic success in our community were developed and discussed. Finally in 2004, Chamber leadership, with financial support from the City of Conyers, Rockdale County Government, and the Development Authority of Rockdale County, established the Conyers Rockdale Economic Development Council (CREDC) as a separate entity dedicated to promoting and enhancing economic development in all its forms from industrial to commercial, institutional to retail, residential to hospitality, and filmmaking to tourism.

CREDC continues to lead economic development efforts with support from Rockdale County and the City of Conyers in partnership with the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce and the Development Authority of Rockdale County as well as the hospital, school system, local business and industry, faith-based organizations, and non-profits. These

partners recognize that collaboration is key to continued economic prosperity in Conyers/Rockdale County. They are all committed to maintaining a business-friendly environment for the more than 2,000 businesses in Conyers/Rockdale County while supporting an exceptional quality of life for all those who live, work, and play in our community.



Above: Left to right: CREDC President & CEO Kevin Hanna, Rockdale County (RC) Chairman Oz Nesbitt, US Congressman Hank Johnson, RC Commissioner Sherry Washington, City of Conyers Mayor Vince Evans, and RC Commissioner Dr. Doreen Williams celebrate upon receiving a federal Workforce Development grant for Conyers/Rockdale County.

Right: Chamber 2022 Past Chair Darlene Hotchiss (far right), recognizes Front Porch collaborators, from L to R, CREDC President & CEO Kevin Hanna, Rockdale County Chairman Oz Nesbitt, City of Conyers Mayor Vince Evans, Piedmont Rockdale CEO Blake Watts, and Rockdale County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Terry Oatts. Front Porch, organized by the Chamber, brings local leaders together to meet collaboratively with community members to maintain open communication.



Congratulations to Our Partners at the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce on 70 Years of Service to the Community. STRONGER TOGETHER!

Working with Our Community Partners to Bring Quality Growth to Conyers/Rockdale!

CREDC

CONYERS ROCKDALE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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Economic development plays an important role in strengthening communities, creating new jobs, supporting existing employers, and promoting shared prosperity. Over the past two years, leaders in Rockdale County and the City of Conyers have taken active steps to chart a new vision and strategy for economic development in the community. This effort seeks to build on the strong economic development foundation in the community and position Conyers/Rockdale for more success in future years.



LioChem, Inc. was established in 1988 as a part of Tokyo Ink Manufacturing Co., Ltd.'s plan to manufacture quality inks, plastic colorants and functional dispersions around the world. Our mission is to manufacture quality products and provide trustworthy service safely and efficiently. The Conyers/Rockdale area, through its superior infrastructure and quality labor force, has been a major component to our success.

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Our Roots Run Deep

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Conyers/Rockdale County today still feels like a small southern town yet offers the amenities and sophistication of a big city. There is a lot to see, do, and enjoy!

Early on, organizers of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce recognized that a vibrant, thriving community was essential to recruiting business and industry to the area. A safe place to raise a family, opportunities for recreation and relaxation, cultural experiences, a quality school system, and access to healthcare, were some of the ideas top of mind for those looking to locate here as well as for existing residents – even 70 years ago.

From the onset, Chamber members have been involved either as leaders or facilitators in bringing and/or promoting organizations, events, festivals, and activities that contribute to an outstanding quality of life. With the goal of being the catalyst for creating a pro-business environment, Chamber members agreed that Conyers/Rockdale County would always be a great place to work, to live, and to play.



Recognizing that accessibility to quality healthcare in the community would benefit local citizens as well as help attract new business, many of the same forward-thinking leaders who established the Chamber supported local doctor Joseph C. Brown's dream of establishing a hospital in Conyers/Rockdale County. The dream became a reality in August 1954. Rockdale Hospital, a 10-bed facility, opened with great fanfare.

Local citizens, government entities, civic organizations, Chamber leaders, and the Callaway Foundation were instrumental in providing funding and other resources. Nearly 70 years later, Rockdale Hospital is now Piedmont Rockdale, a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to providing high-quality healthcare to residents throughout east Atlanta. With more than 400 board-certified and credentialed providers, the 161-bed, acute-care hospital continues to exceed expectations.

"The hospital, supported by the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce since its inception, has been an integral piece of the community's foundation," commented Deborah Armstrong, retired Rockdale Medical Center CEO who served as the 2015 Chamber Board Chair.



Piedmont Hospital supports the Chamber's Leadership Rockdale (LR) program helping to facilitate "Community Wellness Day" and hosting the "Scrub Top Tour" for class participants as well as hosting other Chamber events and activities such as the we3 program..

- Photo 1: Piedmont Rockdale Building A.
- Photo 2: LR Class of 2017 members don "bunny suits" during the "Scrub Top Tour" to step inside an operating room.
- Photo 3: We3 luncheon speakers Darci Gilreath and Dr. Michelle Uzor are all smiles after their presentations.
- Photo 4: Members of the LR Class of 2019 stand in front of the "life-flight" helicopter at the hospital's landing pad.

Rockdale Emergency Relief (RER)/ Conyers-Rockdale Emergency Relief Fund

Neighbors helping neighbors. Simply stated, Rockdale Emergency Relief (RER) was founded by local citizens, civic groups, and businesses to provide financial assistance to county residents who found themselves in emergency situations.

Incorporated in September 1967, the agency was managed for many years by the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce and the United Fund (and eventually became a member agency of the Metropolitan Atlanta United Way).

Throughout the years, RER has remained steadfast in its mission to offer “a hand up, not a handout,” as current RER Director Sandra Jackson-Lett explains. “RER seeks to help families regain stability by addressing their urgent needs so they can get back on the road to self-sufficiency.”



- **Top:** RER volunteers collecting food donations
- **Above:** RER Board members JaNice Van Ness and Peggy Lawrence as well as RER Executive Director Sandra Jackson-Lett, receive a donation from executives of Chamber member and community partner, Clearwave Fiber.
- **Bottom:** A student from Davis Middle School (DMS), displays the bowl he made to support RER. Students at DMS participate in an art project called “Empty Bowls” that enhances students’ awareness of food insecurities in the community. DMS Art Teacher Katy King and her students then host a fundraising dinner for RER. Guests have the opportunity to select an empty bowl to take with them as they leave.





Supporting high quality education has always been a top priority in Conyers/Rockdale County. Since its inception, Chamber members have worked closely with the school system to support students, teachers, programs, and projects.

In 1988, the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce and the Rockdale County Board of Education, recognizing that new funding sources for educational activities needed to be secured, established the Rockdale County Public Schools Foundation (RCPSF). These business-minded leaders understood that tax dollars alone could not support all the educational opportunities necessary to assure the students of Rockdale County an excellent education.

Celebrating its 35th year in 2023, the Foundation continues to advocate for public education and to raise money through tax-deductible contributions to support educational programs and projects not covered in the school system's regular budget.

Governed by a volunteer Board, the Foundation is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. With the Chamber's continued support and leadership, RCPSF has funded creative and educationally beneficial activities through its classroom grant program, provided teachers with opportunities to participate in continuing education, and awarded scholarships to students.



Rockdale County Public Schools Foundation (RCPSF)

- **Top left:** RCPSF board members Arthur Mitchell (left) and Kysa Daniels (right) present the 2018 RCPS Teacher of the Year, Carlos Hernandez (center) with a check from RCPSF for \$500.
- **Top right:** RCPSF Board member J. Middlebrooks presents Aliyah Johnson, HHS Senior Class of 2023, with one of four \$1,000 Scholarships given by the Foundation.
- **Middle:** The 2023 Collins Family Scholarship presented by Travis and Rose Collins (left) to Angel Gomez and Kimberly Cortez, Rockdale Magnet School for Science & Technology (RMSST) seniors Class of 2023, pictured with RMSST Director, Amanda Baskett.
- **Bottom:** At the REACH Scholarship Signing in November 2022, from left to right: RCPSF Board members Heather Duncan, Susan Paul Smith, Robin Berry; REACH Scholarship Honorees, Oyinkansola Omotoso, Brielle Burrow, and Patrick Fovie; RCPSF Board Member Winston Neil and RCPS Superintendent Dr. Terry Oatts. RCPSF raises funds to support REACH (Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen), a mentorship and scholarship program through REACH Georgia.

Conyers-Rockdale Clean & Beautiful Commission Keep Conyers-Rockdale Beautiful (KCRB)



While acting as Greeting Service Hostess for the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce from 1976 to 1979, the late Anne A. Waldrop visited over 2,500 families, spoke to many newcomers, and realized the importance of making a good first impression. She believed that people want to live and work in a community that is litter-free and filled with blooming flora and fauna. With support of the Chamber and other community leaders, she turned her passion into action.

The Conyers-Rockdale Clean and Beautiful Commission was formed and certified by Keep America Beautiful, Inc. in November 1977, and two years later, Mrs. Waldrop became its executive director. Her passion for making this community more attractive is still evident today. When you enter Rockdale County via I-20 East, you will notice a giant rock emblazoned with the greeting, “Rockdale County Welcomes You.” She worked with the City of Conyers and the State

Department of Transportation and garnered local fundraising support to complete this project.

As you drive around Conyers Rockdale County, you will notice, especially during the summer months when their vibrant red, pink, and white blossoms are popping, that crepe myrtles richly dot the landscape. Mrs. Waldrop’s favorite blooming shrub was the crepe myrtle and in 1981 she started the Crepe Myrtle Project in which she sought to make Rockdale County the “Crepe Myrtle Capital of the World.”

Currently operating as Keep Conyers-Rockdale Beautiful (KCRB), the focus is on empowering all citizens to make Conyers-Rockdale a cleaner, greener, more vital community through continuing participation in recycling drives and clean-up events.



*Welcome
to
Conyers/
Rockdale
County.*

The Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce working with Maxell Corporation and a host of volunteers launched the first Cherry Blossom Festival in March 1982. The idea originated when Maxell Corporation, which opened a facility here in 1980, donated cherry trees to the City of Conyers as a way of expressing friendship and sharing Japanese culture with the community. Wayne Ingle, who served as Chamber Board Chair in 1985, recalls visiting Japan early in the planning process “to view their cherry trees in bloom and to partake in their local traditional celebrations. When we originally launched the festival, the events focused on the Japanese culture,” explained Ingle.

From a simple gesture of kindness more than 40 years ago, the Conyers Cherry Blossom Festival has grown to include thousands of participants from many diverse cultures. Scheduled during the blossoming of the beautiful Yoshino Cherry Trees each spring, the festival encourages cultural understanding and friendship through international music, dance, arts, crafts, food, games, and entertainment for all ages. Coordinated by the City of Conyers with support from the community, and held at the beautiful Georgia International Horse Park, the Cherry Blossom Festival is a much-anticipated tradition.



*Photos:
Japanese art
demonstrations
presented during
an annual
Cherry Blossom
Festival.*



Conyers Cherry Blossom Festival

1996 Summer Olympics – Equestrian Events

“The World Comes to Conyers,” read the bold headline in The Rockdale Citizen on Thursday, October 23, 1991. A photo below the headline featured the smiling faces of dozens of exhilarated people who had worked tirelessly to achieve the lofty goal of bringing the 1996 Olympic Equestrian Events to Conyers/Rockdale County. However, without foresight and planning among leaders in this community, including the Chamber, the story might have had another ending.

Prior to Atlanta being named as the host for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, the City of Conyers had been considering options for developing an equestrian center in north Rockdale.

When it was announced that Atlanta would host the 1996 Summer Games, the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) stated that they would be developing facilities to host the equestrian events at a site only 30 minutes from Conyers. City officials realized that holding these events at a site so close to Conyers would render their plan impractical.

Optimism prevailed, however, when local leaders learned that the site originally slated to host the equestrian events would not be hosting them after all; ACOG would be looking for another site! Described as a dream-team, the Conyers-Rockdale Equestrian Task Force was formed including leaders from the City of Conyers, Rockdale County, the Chamber, and the community at-large. This team rose to the challenge and ultimately introduced Conyers/Rockdale County to the world.

The summer of 1996 was an exciting time for the entire community. More than 600,000 visitors traveled in and around Conyers/Rockdale during the period of the Centennial Olympic Games. Residents, tourists, Olympians and their families, and television audiences around the globe watched the equestrian events, the first ever mountain bike competition, and the final two events of the modern pentathlon being held at the Georgia International Horse Park (GIHP)!

The Olympic legacy continues . . . The Georgia International Horse Park, open year-round, hosts events nearly every day of the year including

equestrian competitions, festivals, rodeos, and corporate events. In addition, the Park includes a 173-acre nature preserve called the Big Haynes Creek Nature Center offering a canoe launch, observation pavilion overlooking the wetlands, nature trails, and discover stations. With the Arnold Palmer-designed Cherokee Run Golf Club at the Park and a hotel offering comfortable suites, the GIHP continues to live up to its motto of “Groomed for Greatness.”



Members of the Conyers-Rockdale Equestrian Task Force and supporters celebrating the announcement that the City of Conyers had been selected as the site for the 1996 Olympic Equestrian Events.



Soon after the Centennial Olympic Games introduced Conyers/Rockdale to the world, filmmakers started to take notice as well. While the diversity of our community's landscape from water riverbanks to rocky terrain, pastoral hills to city streets, and more may have initially attracted production companies to Conyers/Rockdale, it is the friendly support from community leaders, businesses, and government entities that keeps them coming back.

While the Conyers Rockdale Economic Development Council (CREDC) is the primary point of contact with the movie/television industry, the Chamber promotes community cooperation and coordination.

The City of Conyers Convention and Visitors Bureau assures that guests to the area know all that Conyers/Rockdale County has to offer. Financial incentives from the state of Georgia along with an abundance of varied locations, a dynamic and skilled workforce of film production specialists, and a dedicated camera-ready film liaison to assist producers and location managers with filming in our community have made it possible for the film and television production industry to grow and flourish.

Conyers/Rockdale County is known as the "Biggest Little Filming Community in Georgia." From blockbuster feature films like "Fast and Furious" (Fast Five) and "Identity Thief" to small independent films like "Selma" and "Miracles from Heaven" as well as successful major network television series like "In the Heat of the Night," "The Vampire Diaries," "The Originals" and "Legacies," "Doom Patrol," "The Resident," "MacGyver," and series' streaming on Netflix, "Stranger Things" and "Ozark," Hollywood appears to be at home in Conyers/Rockdale County!



Photos: Signage and production activity from local film sets.



Tourism, TV & Filmmaking

Conyers/Rockdale Council for the Arts (CRCA)



The arts enrich lives and unify communities. Chamber

leaders knew that expanding cultural opportunities and understanding was necessary to support Conyers/Rockdale County's growth and development.

Under the leadership of Bill Pridgen, 1988 Chamber Board Chair, a committee was formed to evaluate options for bringing more arts activities to the area. The Conyers-Rockdale Council for the Arts (CRCA) was formed as a result.

CRCA, established in 1989 as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, serves to connect neighbors, cultivate artistic expression, and celebrate our community's stories through the power of creativity and the arts. "Arts and cultural activities are essential to a thriving community," explains Shelli Siebert, CRCA Executive Director. "Cultural arts activities nurture imagination, help us understand and connect with one-another, and improve our sense of well-being." Headquartered in Olde Town Conyers, CRCA operates the Paula Vaughn Black Box Theater and hosts many programs, events, and art camps.



- **Banner Photo:** "Greetings from Conyers" mural depicting unique attributes and attractions throughout the community was created by CRCA after receiving a Vibrant Communities Grant by the Georgia Council for the Arts. The mural is painted on a building located adjacent to the Randal S. Mills Pavilion in Olde Town Conyers.
- **Top left and middle:** Children ages 5 – 14 gather year-after-year for the always exciting and creative activities associated with the ArtSmart camps sponsored by CRCA.
- **Bottom:** A young volunteer serves as a magician's assistant to the delight of his peers during a Preschool Pops program.



What's Next?

The Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce exists to represent, serve, and support our members as we seek to foster a safe community in which our businesses can thrive. We have a rich history of working together to build a place that we can all call home.

Since its inception, the Chamber of Commerce has been pro-business encouraging entrepreneurship, innovation, and advocacy. We have been pro-community, recognizing that supporting diversity and inclusion creates a dynamic quality of life.

Our collective strengths distinguish Conyers/Rockdale County as a great place to live and work. We are leaders who embrace change and challenge, understanding that through courageous conversation, engaging dialogue, and continuous learning, we will be better positioned to serve our members and citizens.

We are deeply rooted in all aspects of Conyers/Rockdale County. Over the years, we have supported and facilitated all kinds of growth and development in our community to meet the evolving needs of our businesses and citizens. We remain committed to this goal and look forward with excitement to the future as we seek to discover, "What's Next?"



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JACK TURNER
1954-59

Leading the Charge

At its first organizational meeting on May 13, 1954, Jack Turner, one of the original organizers of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce, was named Board of Directors Chair (then called President) of the newly formed Chamber. Turner held that position until 1959. A.R. "Gus" Barksdale, also one of the original Chamber founders, served as Chair for 12 years from 1959 to 1971.

Sharing their vision and guiding the Chamber for a total of 16 years, these two leaders had a desire to help our community grow and prosper. They were strategic thinkers who shared their ideas, gave of their resources, and encouraged individual and business participation.

Throughout the 70-year history of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce, there have been 55 individuals to hold the title of Board of Governors Chair (President). Every person who has served in this capacity has a goal to improve the quality of life in Conyers/Rockdale County because they have recognized the community's potential for growth and development. "We truly had a sincere desire to serve and grow our business community," said Ron Simpson, 1980 Chair.



JAMES CULPEPPER
1972



F.W. WALDROP
1973



R.L. MONTGOMERY
1974



T.O. MORGAN
1975



LEONARD EPSTEIN
1977



DR. WILLIAM A. WEAVER
1978



HAROLD BREAZEALE
1979



RON SIMPSON
1980



PAUL CHRISTENBURY
1981



ED HOLCOMB
1982



LARRY MAULDIN
1983



RICK RAMSEY
1984

Our Chamber Chairs are Dedicated to Moving this Community Forward



A.R. "GUS" BARKSDALE
1959-71



WAYNE INGLE
1985



DAN L. HILL
1986



T.A. SCHMIDT
1987



WILLIAM PRIDGEN
1988



ARCHER ROSE
1989



ROBERT W. MADDOX
1990



E.A. THOMAS, JR.
1991



SAMUEL F. WISHON
1992



MICHAEL P. JONES
1993



JOHN T. ABBOTT
1994



KIM S. HUBBARD
1995



JOHN T. HIGGINBOTTOM
1996

Our Board Chairs have understood that like-minded individuals and businesses working together with government entities, faith-based leaders, civic/non-profit organizations, and others can positively impact those who live and work in Conyers/Rockdale County.

"The Chamber plays a vital role in our growth and development, and in keeping our local economy and quality of life at a very high level," commented Don Cannon, 2008 Chair. "I wanted to be a part of such a worthwhile effort and to give back to my community." Mo Talley, 2011 Board Chair shared that sentiment, "I became involved in the Chamber to be a participant in the community, not a spectator."

Working with the staff, the board chair oversees the programs and activities of the Chamber. Dee Barnes, 2017 Chair, noted that the Chamber's programming "contributes greatly to the success of our community. Our programs encourage working together and building connections."

Our board chairs believe in the work of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce to make our community better for future generations.



PAUL MILLS HERNDON
1996



ROBERT G. COSTON
1996



FRED VICK
1997



SUZANNE E. CHAPPELL
1998



GUY M. DABBS, III
1999



NELSON E. TOEBBE
2000



LARRY D. MILLER
2001



C. DEAN ALFORD
2002



CHRIS M. INGLE
2003



J. NELSON GETER
2004

Conyers-Rockdale County Chamber of Commerce Mission Statement

*We strive to provide leadership and
be the catalyst for promoting
and maintaining a
pro-business environment,
and to continue enhancing the
quality of life for our community.*



DANNY STONE
2005



BETTY STRAW BROWN
2006



MICHAEL C. HILLEBOE
2007



DON CANNON
2008



JOHN KELLEY
2009



BILL DANIEL
2010



MO TALLEY
2011



LORRAINE HARRISON
2012



THUA G. BARLAY
2013



T. PAT CAVANAUGH
2014



DEBORAH P. ARMSTRONG
2015



EARL WISE
2016



DEANE "DEE" BARNES
2017



TIM BAKER
2018



FAYE PHILLIPS
2019



SCOT WARD
2020-21



DARLENE E. HOTCHKISS
2022



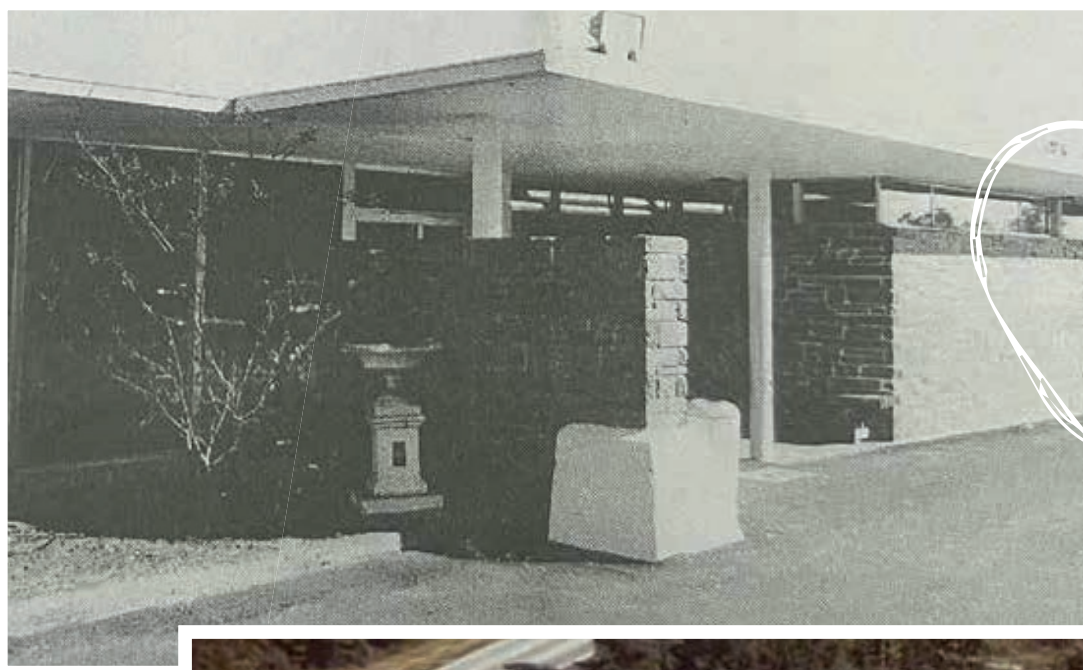
CRAIG W. JOHNSON
2023



STEVE BROMELL
2024

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A. R. "Gus" Barksdale Lifetime Achievement Award

James P. Culpepper Volunteer of the Year Award

Jerry Barboe Small Business Person of the Year

Charles C. Walker Community Spirit Award

There are people who come and go in our lives. They leave an indelible mark because of their unwavering commitment, outstanding contributions, remarkable work ethic, enthusiasm, and vision. Their influence changes us and makes us want to do better; be better.

To honor the enduring impact of these extraordinary individuals and to recognize ongoing achievements over the years, the Chamber established special awards that are presented yearly. These awards pay tribute to those who have "paved the way" while acknowledging the efforts of exceptional individuals who carry on the legacy and inspire future generations.

The Chamber's Annual Meeting is traditionally the time of year when we pay tribute to those who have supported the Chamber and this community.



A.R. "Gus" Barksdale



James P. Culpepper



Jerry Barboe



Charles C. Walker

A.R. "GUS" BARKSDALE Lifetime Achievement Award



A.R. "Gus" Barksdale, known as one of Rockdale County's leading citizens, was also one of the original founders of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce. A well-respected businessman, Barksdale was known as a devoted family man and dedicated community servant. Notably, Barksdale served as president of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce from 1959 to 1971 and led early efforts to

attract industry to this then rural farming area. He was a member of the Rockdale Hospital Authority and helped build the existing facility, Piedmont Rockdale, which is located near the intersection of Milstead Avenue and Sigman Road.

An attorney by profession, he was involved in many civic and charitable causes including Rockdale Cares and the Conyers Rotary Club (where he was a Charter member, past president, and received its highest honor: the Paul Harris Fellow). He was a champion of education and of individuals with developmental disabilities.

He recognized the value of every individual to be educated and supported efforts to improve the quality of life for those in his community. The A.R. "Gus" Barksdale Boys and Girls Club, built in 1977, was so named to honor his many contributions. His friends knew him as a gentle man who did good works quietly. He often said that his goal was to leave the community better than he found it.

In 1985, Barksdale was recognized as the first recipient of the Chamber's Distinguished Service Award. In 1987, the award was renamed the A.R. "Gus" Barksdale Lifetime Achievement Award. Since then, the Chamber has presented this award to an individual (or group) that has positively impacted the quality of life in Conyers/Rockdale County. This award is a tribute to Barksdale's legacy and the Chamber's sincere appreciation for the recipient's vision, leadership, and compassion.



*Left: 2014
Chamber Chair T.
Pat Cavanaugh,
2014 Award winner
Rev. Al Sadler and
2013 Award Winner
Randy Mills*



*Top right: Judge
Nancy Bills, 2020
Award Winner, Judge David Irwin,
2021 Chamber Chair Scot Ward
Middle: 1998 Award Winner Ron Simpson
and 2011 Award Winner Ethel Boyle
Bottom: 2021 Award Winner Judge Garland
Moore with Chamber Member Moses Kabia*

1987 – James P. Culpepper
1988 – Tom Hay
1989 – Judge Clarence Vaughn
1990 – Nancy Guinn Library
1991 – City of Conyers &
Rockdale County
1992 – Jack Turner
1993 – Ed Cowan
1995 – Julia Morgan
1996 – Matt Dixon
1997 – Healing Hands
Lakeview Projects

1998 – Ron Simpson
1999 – Bill Rogers
2001 – Clarence "Bud" Sosebee
2002 – Tommy Morgan
2003 – Scott Foster
2004 – Norman Wheeler
2005 – Charles Walker
2006 – Joy Jones
2007 – Cleveland Stroud
2008 – Joanne Caldwell
2009 – Bill Hughey
2010 – Ed Conway

2011 – Ethel Boyle
2012 – Judge Sidney Nation
2013 – Mayor Randal S. Mills
2014 – Rev. Al Sadler
2015 – Allan Jones
2016 – Barbara Kilpatrick
2017 – Tommy Clack
2018 – Dave & Anita Smith
2019 – Albert A. Myers, Jr.
2020 – Judge David E. Irwin
2021 – Judge Garland C. Moore
2022 – Marty Jones

JAMES P. CULPEPPER

Volunteer of the Year Award

As the newly appointed president of the C&S Bank of Rockdale County, James P. Culpepper moved to the area in the fall of 1961. He quickly became involved with the business community and specifically, volunteering with the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce. As a banker, he was instrumental in helping business and the relatively new Chamber grow and flourish.

Through his involvement with the Chamber, he served to create a supportive and welcoming environment for the expanding business community. Known for his integrity and being a wise and compassionate Chamber volunteer and leader, he had an easy manner and ready smile. He served as the Chamber's Board Chair in 1972 following the nearly

12-year tenure of A.R. "Gus" Barksdale. Culpepper also served as a member of the Hospital Authority, Conyers Rotary Club, and First Baptist Conyers. He even has a road named for him – Culpepper Drive off Parker Road!

The Conyers/Rockdale Chamber of Commerce thrives because of the dedication, commitment, and leadership of its countless volunteers.

The James P. Culpepper Volunteer of the Year Award is presented to an individual who sees a need or opportunity and takes the initiative to make a positive impact. The recipient of this award is generous with their time and energy, demonstrates care and concern, and recognizes that volunteerism is vital to our success.



Top right: 2020 Award Winner Brenda Landers

Middle: 2017 Award Winner Andrea Bowens-Jones with 2017 Board Chair Dee Barnes and 2015 Award Winner Scot Ward

Bottom left: 2016 Chamber Chair Earl Wise congratulates 2016 Award Winner Alan Sherrill.

2000 – Brian Howe
 2001 – George Fertal
 2002 – Larry Miller
 2003 – Don Cannon
 2004 – Susan Paul Smith
 2005 – Tim Baker & Claire Cline
 2006 – Scott Hartsell & Stan Williams
 2007 – Tom Schmidt
 2008 – Julian Harwell & Brian Howe
 2009 – David Shipp
 2010 – Joe Rhodes
 2011 – Brandi Wells
 2012 – Diane Adoma
 2013 – Earl Wise
 2014 – Marcie Howington
 2015 – Scot Ward
 2016 – Alan Sherrill
 2017 – Andrea Bowens-Jones
 2018 – Michael Hutcheson
 2019 – Thomas Dean
 2020 – Brenda Landers
 2021 – Yvette Morton Williams
 2022 – Steve Bromell

JERRY BARBOE

Small Business Person of the Year

Successful small business owner and dedicated civic leader, Jerome (Jerry) Barboe, was always ready to lend a hand when you needed him. Those who knew him said he was easy-going and friendly.

As owner of Citizens Office Supply, he became an active member of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce serving as a member of the Board of Governors and vice president of membership services as well as chairing the membership and small business committees. His community service

included the Boys & Girls Club, the Conyers Rotary Club, Rockdale County Vocational Advisory Council (a program for local high schools), and Conyers Presbyterian Church.

Following his death in December 1987, the Chamber established the Jerry Barboe Small Business Person of the Year Award. This award honors the legacy of Barboe who represented the highest ideals of business integrity and dedication to the community.



1989 Chamber Chair Archer Rose presents Lorraine (Goard) Harrison with the 1989 award. She was also the award recipient in 2009 for another business she owned.



Top: 1987 Award Winner Ron Simpson stands in the office of Chamber President Alan Long with Chamber Small Business Chair Lorraine Harrison.

Bottom: 2012 Award Winner Elly Dalton stands with Jerry Barboe's wife, Jackie Barboe, at the Annual Meeting.

1987 – Ron Simpson,
Ron Simpson Insurance

1988 – Maurice Oliver,
M & L Electrical Contractors

1989 – Lorraine (Goard) Harrison,
Progressive Development

1990 – Mike Hutton, Hutton Chevrolet

1991 – Wayne Jones, Sherwood Forest

1992 – Wayne Kerr, Wayne Kerr DDS

1993 – Jessie (Walker) Brown,
HA-LO Branded Pro

1994 – Cheryl Muré,
Sylvan Learning Center

1995 – Jefferson Riley, THP Printing

1996 – Ed Cowan
Cowan Ace Hardware

1997 – Karen (Winstead) Ruetz,
TK Graphics

1998 – Ronald Kent, Associated Paper

1999 – Anita Smith,
Custom Engraving & Signs

2000 – Danny Lockhart,
A Clean & Tidy

2001 – Chris Ingle,
Ingle Courier Service

2002 – JaNice Van Ness,
Peachtree Academy

2005 – Mark Shurett,
Shurett Dental Services

2006 – Susan Paul Smith,
SPS Communications

2007 – Benny Atkins, National EMS

2008 – Scot Ward,
Scot Ward Funeral Services

2009 – Lorraine Harrison,
About Conyers Magazine

2010 – Rodger Rehorn,
Tri-Starr Investigations

2011 – David Shipp
Puritan Dry Cleaners

2012 – Elly Dalton, Edward Jones

2013 – Dee Barnes, Evans Tool & Die

2014 – Thua G. Barlay,
Barlay Law Group, LLC

2015 – J. Middlebrooks, E. Smith Box

2016 – Dotti Bala, Copy Central

2017 – Shawn Bromell,
Pro Cutters Landscapes

2018 – Paulette Simpson,
High Priority Plumbing

CHARLES C. WALKER Community Spirit Award



When you look up the definition of community spirit, you might see a photo of Charles C. Walker! He embodied the meaning of community spirit: a willingness and desire to participate in activities that promote a community.

Community spirit is about building goodwill, spreading kindness and cheer, and creating a sense of belonging. Charles Walker loved Conyers/Rockdale County and worked tirelessly on our behalf. For 20 years, from 1977 to 1997, he served as Mayor of the City of Conyers.

Following his retirement from politics, he dedicated his days as a member of the Chamber staff for more than ten years.

Known as a gentleman and a scholar, he was an optimistic and quiet leader. He is credited with building the tourism industry in Conyers as well as fostering the dream of bringing the Equestrian events to the city for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. One of the facilities at the Georgia International Horse Park is named in his honor – the Charles C. Walker Arena.

While the Chamber's Community Spirit Award was initiated in 2002 to show appreciation to those who continually and passionately promote this community and seek opportunities to make it more livable, the name was changed with the 2017 presentation to honor the legacy of Charles C. Walker.

2002 – Wayne E. Kerr
2003 – Harriet Gattis
2004 – Bio-Lab
2005 – Lakeview Community Project
2006 – National EMS
2007 – Scot Ward
2008 – Jeff Beech
2009 – First Baptist Conyers
2010 – Jim 'N Nick's
2011 – Jean Yontz
2012 – Fred Hedrick
2013 – Macedonia Baptist Church
2014 – Chick-Fil-A Conyers
2015 – Claire Cline
2016 – Ruth Wilson
2017 – Muddessar Ahmad
2018 – JaNice Van Ness
2019 – Darlene Hotchkiss
2020 – Sheldon Landy
2021 – Springfield Baptist Church
2022 – Susan Paul Smith



*Top left: 2022 Chamber Chair Darlene Hotchkiss, 2021 Award Winner Pastor Eric Lee of Springfield Baptist Church, and 2020 Award Winner Sheldon Landy, One Heart Ministries
Middle: 2016 Chamber Chair Earl Wise, 2016 Award Winner Ruth Wilson, and 2015 Award Winner Claire Cline
Bottom left: 2018 Chamber Chair Tim Baker, 2018 Award Winner JaNice Van Ness, and 2017 Award Winner Muddessar Ahmad*




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MONASTERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Fred J. Boscarino



If there were a Chamber of Commerce Executive Hall of Fame, Fred J. Boscarino would be featured as the ideal Chamber leader! Loyal, creative, ethical, fair, honest, kind, faithful, goal-oriented, small business advocate, and innovator are just some of the words used to describe how he approaches Chamber work and life in general.

Having been in the Chamber business for nearly 42 years, almost 21 years in Conyers/Rockdale County, Boscarino considers himself to be “street smart” in the Chamber world. His focus is simple: people. “Relationships are important. My job is to be the voice for business and an advocate for the community.”

When Boscarino joined the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce in July 2003, the board was looking for someone to focus on traditional Chamber work. They found the perfect candidate just 30 minutes down the road. Boscarino was serving as executive director for the Madison-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce before finding a home in Conyers/Rockdale County.

Serving in Madison for just five years, he left an admirable track record of accomplishments. A salesman at heart, Boscarino is always thinking about how to enhance the value of Chamber membership.

“I believe the successful Chamber must focus on its members and be fiscally responsible with their investment,” commented Boscarino. He is as good as his word.

His creativity and determination have made the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce financially sound while increasing benefits and expanding programs and networking opportunities for Chamber members.

Chamber Chair 2023 Craig Johnson and Fred Boscarino at the 2022 Annual Meeting



The Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce was certified in 2011 as part of the inaugural class of the Georgia Certified Chambers program. Pictured left to right: Fred Boscarino, Thua Barlay, Mo Talley, Lorraine Harrison, Cal Rueping, and Pat Cavanaugh.

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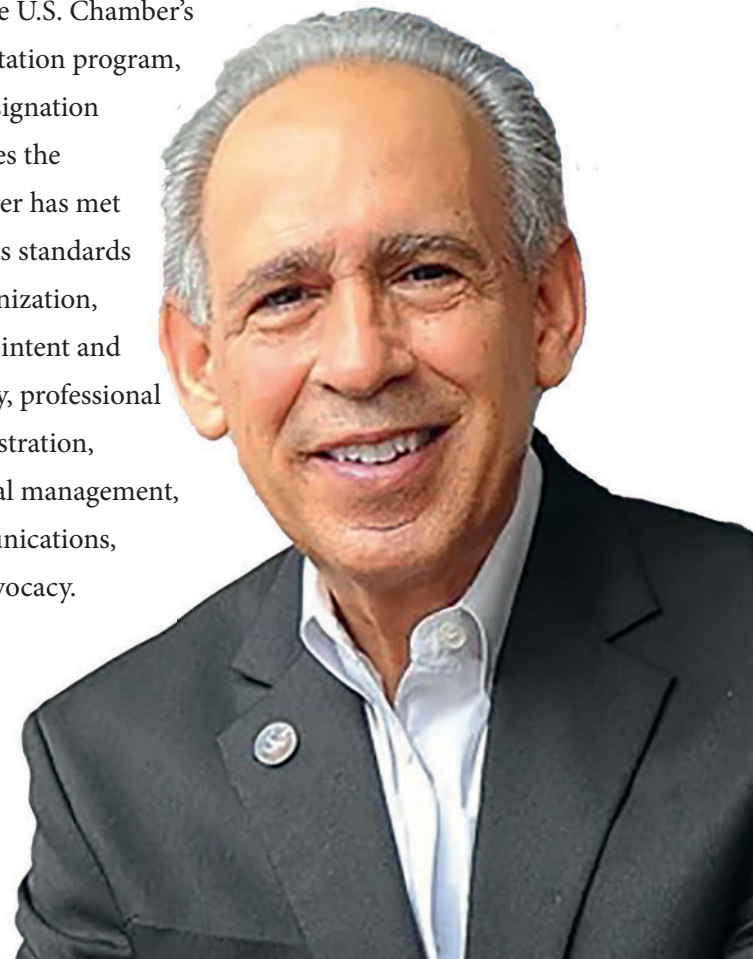
“The Board hired the right guy when they chose Fred,” commented Marty Jones, former Conyers Rockdale Economic Development Council (CREDC) Executive Director and Conyers City Councilman, who worked closely with Boscarino for nearly 20 years. “Fred is an idea man. He’s always looking for prospects to benefit the Chamber and its members. He’s tight as a tick when it comes to spending,” Jones adds, smiling, “but he always finds a way to offer programs that help members and the community.”

A seasoned Chamber executive, Boscarino knows programs come and go as needs and interests change. However, a few of his ideas have been enduring. For example, the Entrepreneurial Academy that helps aspiring entrepreneurs learn from local experts about the ins and outs of starting a business, is now in its 20th year. Member networking opportunities such as Leads Groups and luncheons that began soon after Boscarino arrived have evolved and continue to be offered regularly.

The publication, “A Helpful Guide to Starting and Growing a Business in Rockdale County,” developed by Boscarino provides important resources to aspiring business owners.

This commitment to small business and entrepreneurship contributed to the Chamber being named in 2004 as one of the first Entrepreneur-Friendly Communities by the Georgia Department of Economic Development under Governor Sonny Perdue.

In 2011, the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce received designation as a Georgia Certified Chamber. Modeled after the U.S. Chamber’s accreditation program, this designation indicates the Chamber has met rigorous standards in organization, service intent and capacity, professional administration, financial management, communications, and advocacy.



Recognized by the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (GACCE) as the Chamber Executive of the Year in 2012, he is highly regarded in his field, by his peers and by the countless small businesses he has bettered. Boscarino began his career in 1981 working for Chambers in Clearwater, St. Petersburg, Tallahassee, and West Palm Beach, Florida, before relocating to Georgia.

He has served as a consultant with Chambers throughout the U.S., authored articles and pamphlets sharing membership strategies, and taught at the Chamber Institute for Organizational Management. Boscarino has served on the Board of Directors for GACCE, the Georgia Board of Regents for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Board of Directors of the National Association of Membership Development (NAMD).

“Fred is definitely Chamber smart,” says Craig Johnson, 2023 Chamber Board Chair. “Our Chamber has benefitted from his expertise, commitment, and dedication. We maintained a positive bottom line – even during the pandemic – because of Fred’s fiscal acumen and financial savvy.”

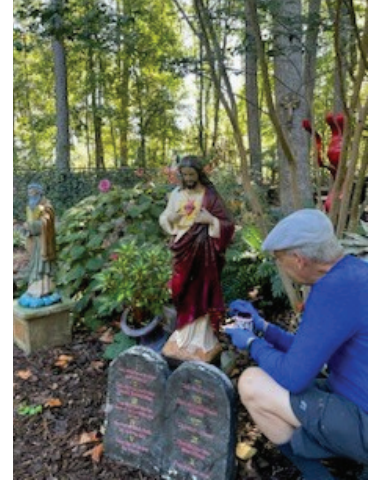
Good friend, mentor, and former boss, Peter Woodham, calls Fred “Mr. Go To.” “When I was President of the Clearwater Area Chamber in 1984, Fred served as Membership Director. It wasn’t long before I realized he was the one to “go to” to get anything done in our community or to find out who to contact to make productive things happen. Talking with leaders in Conyers over the years, I know that Fred is the one they go to for productive programs and plans. I am very proud to call him one of my best friends.”

Yvette Morton-Williams, 2023 Board Member shared, “I had the pleasure of meeting Fred only four years ago when I joined the Chamber. Since that time, he has become a dear friend. Fred is a special man whose faith, palpable success with his intentional connecting of people, and undying commitment to our business community, has served us well. It is no wonder he was recognized and honored as a Chamber Executive of the Year and that he continues to flourish after 40+ years in this industry. I am honored to call him, and his sweet wife Amy, dear friends.”

Boscarino and his wife Amy have been married for nearly 40 years. His interests include reading, biking, painting religious statues, and spending time at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit when he needs time for reflection and renewal. Brother Callistus, Monastery Operations Administrator, says, “Fred has been a good friend of the Monastery helping us to garner community support and elevate awareness of our presence and place in Rockdale County.”

When looking back on his long tenure in the Chamber business, Boscarino says, “I truly believe my purpose has been to help businesses prosper. My determination becomes stronger when I see a business thriving.” When asked what makes the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce so successful, Boscarino quickly responds, “great staff and awesome volunteers! I’ve had the privilege of working with the best.”

*Left: Brother Callistus, Monastery Operations Administrator, and Boscarino walking around the Monastery of the Holy Spirit.
Above: Boscarino works on refurbishing and repainting religious statues.*



Interested in Starting a Business?

Entrepreneurial Academy

Make it #1 on Your To Do List



Anyone who has ever started or tried to start a new business knows it can be an overwhelming task. How do you get started? What resources do you need to have in place? Who can help with

financial planning, marketing, sales, etc. The myriad of “To Do’s” can make any hopeful new business owner dizzy.

For aspiring entrepreneurs in the Conyers/Rockdale County area and beyond, there is help! The Entrepreneurial Academy, created from the vision of Chamber President Fred Boscarino, engages seasoned entrepreneurs who share their experiences regarding the positives and perils of owning your own business.

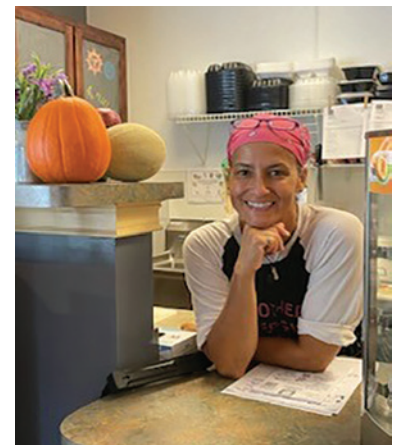
Since it began in 2004, the Chamber has been hosting the Entrepreneurial Academy that provides a series of workshops addressing topics such as getting started, managing your business, marketing strategies, finances, promotion, sales, legal issues, ethics, and time management. Offered twice a year, the small class size makes for a comfortable setting in which to ask questions and get answers.

E'lure Salon & Spa owner Charlotte Allen explained, “I learned so much in this six-week program about what it takes to run a business. I highly recommend this course if you are thinking about getting into business for yourself.” Kimberly Hoston, owner of AVA (Another Veggie Addict) Bistro added,

“Attending the Entrepreneurial Academy enabled me to gain more resources to keep my business moving forward. It was so beneficial!”

Over the past 20 years, the program has graduated more than 700 participants.

The Entrepreneurial Academy and other Chamber efforts to provide an environment to help small business grow and locate here have contributed to Conyers/Rockdale County being named by Governor Sonny Perdue in 2004 as an Entrepreneur-Friendly community.



Left: E'Lure Salon & Spa Owner Charlotte Allen

Above: Another Veggie Addict (AVA) Owner Kimberly Hoston

Below: Entrepreneurial Academy graduates, November 2023



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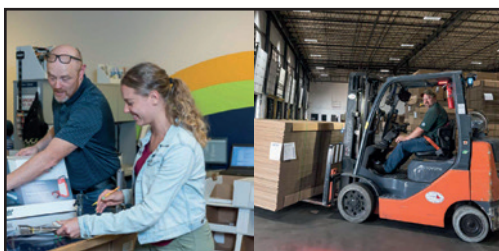


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The Most Epic! Legendary Class!

The Most Impactful! Best Class Ever!

Best Class Ever . . . Really!

Regardless of the class moniker, one thing is crystal clear when you talk to graduates of the Leadership Rockdale program . . . it changes you for the better!

"I was so impressed by the program when I participated, I asked to be a facilitator," Claire Cline, Class of 1996, enthusiastically declared. "That was nearly 30 years ago. I'm still volunteering because I continue to be amazed by the people who participate. It's incredible how relative strangers come together as friends and colleagues throughout the course of the program and then invest their time, energy, and knowledge back into the community to promote positive growth."

The Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce started Leadership Rockdale in 1986. Randy Cardoza, Chamber Executive Director at the time said, "We made the decision to initiate Leadership Rockdale to help develop the skills and

knowledge of local business leaders as well as to expand volunteerism in the Chamber and community."

It worked!



Leadership Rockdale

First Class Ever! **Inaugural Class of 1986**



Front row left to right: Kathy Garber, Kim Hubbard, Rhonda Hicks, Kathy O'Neill, Barbara Edwards, Barbara Bramblett, Marsha Rose, Allan Jones. Middle row left to right: Wales Barksdale, David Irwin, Sara Sanford, William Todd, Lorraine (Goard) Harrison, Mary Staples, Ellis Dunbar, John Nix. Back row left to right: Benny Clark, Bill Pridgen, Paula Vaughn, Tony Lucas, Debbie Elder, John Fountain, Mac Perkins, Wayne Baker.



As a graduate of the inaugural Class of 1986 Wales Barksdale explained, “Even though it has been more than 36 years, I still remember completing a lengthy application to be considered for the program. Initially, representatives from the University of Georgia Continuing Education Center facilitated the program and it focused a lot on leadership skills development.”

Over the years, the program has expanded its focus. Leadership Rockdale provides a learning experience for current and emerging leaders in Rockdale County. Through a series of day-long sessions over the course of seven months, participants learn about and develop an understanding of the promises and challenges facing Conyers/ Rockdale County.



Topics such as community development, education, local and state government, business and industry, community wellness, and volunteerism are addressed through lectures, tours, panel discussions, and informal Q&A sessions.



Top left: Graduating during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Shawn Bromell poses “safely” with the cutout “likeness” versions of the LR Facilitators, Susan Paul Smith, Claire Cline, Scot Ward, and Katy Zahradnik.

Middle left: Auvronette Gilbeaux assists Cindy Rehorn with “gearing up” for the LR Class of 2017 Scrub Top Tour at the hospital.

Bottom: Charlie Gasner and Santana Flanigan, LR Class of 2019, get tips on flying airplanes from students in the aerospace program at Conyers Middle School.

Top right: Cooking healthy was on the agenda for the LR Class of 2023 during their Community Wellness session. Pictured L-R are John Taylor, Elia Espuet, and Shaun Jackson.

Bottom right: LR 2018 Classmates, Venus Arthur, Kevin Taffe and MaryLou Snow, ham it up for the skit competition during the opening retreat.

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A Leader Among Leaders



Over the years, many Chamber volunteers have stepped up to help facilitate Leadership Rockdale. However, Claire Cline, affectionately known as “Mama Bear” by class participants, deserves special recognition. For almost 30 years, her unwavering dedication, support, wisdom, caring, and enthusiasm have been the gold standard by which the program operates.

A tradition unique to Leadership Rockdale, classmates pose in silly hats for the annual program directory. A fun icebreaker, Claire initiated this activity at orientation allowing participants to laugh and let their guard down as they are getting to know one another. It's always fun to reflect on an individual's hat selections.

Thank You, Mama Bear!



Top left: LR Class of 1996 and LR Facilitator Claire Cline affectionately known as “Mama Bear.”

Bottom: LR Class of 2012 pose in the infamous hats at the conclusion of the retreat.

Top right: LR Class of 1998 and LR Program Facilitator Tim Baker poses with “pumpkin head” alongside LR Facilitator Claire Cline.

Bottom right: LR Class of 2010 Beverly Johnson participates in a team building exercise.



Lending a
hand...

Leaving a *Legacy*

the LEGACY PROJECT

One of the most compelling aspects of Leadership Rockdale in recent years has been the annual Legacy Project.



2015



2017



2019



2022

Legacy Projects

2015

Updated play area and grounds for Head Start Early Learning Center

2016

Beautification of the entrance to the Walk of Heroes Georgia Veterans War Memorial Park

2017

Improvements to Phoenix Pass after-school study room, office, and recreation area

2018

Installed a rock garden and upgraded the front porch sitting area at Magnolia Hospice

2019

Designed and created the Unity Garden and built seating for CASA outdoor visiting area

2020

Commissioned a mural in Olde Town Conyers and installed bike racks throughout the city

2022

Renovated Elks Aidmore recreation room for the residents

2023

Decorated and furnished a calm-down room at Sims Elementary School and established a ½ mile walking track at Piedmont Rockdale



2016



2018



2020



2023

The idea for creating a Leadership Rockdale class project was sparked initially by the Class of 2011. Class members thought to use their new collective knowledge to make a positive impact on the community. They researched ideas and decided to initiate an effort that was called Hands Across Rockdale (HAR) to celebrate the spirit of volunteerism through a day of community service across Conyers/Rockdale County. Whether it was light painting, spreading mulch, helping abandoned dogs and cats find a home, or even creating an outdoor classroom space, people from all over the community came together as neighbors helping neighbors.

Eventually Hands Across Rockdale was absorbed by other community groups who kept it going until 2018. However, the Leadership Rockdale participants were still interested in completing a class project, so the Leadership Rockdale Legacy Project began with the Class of 2015. There is no typical project. Each class identifies what they want to accomplish, develops a plan, raises necessary funds, and implements the project. The one requirement is that all class members must participate in the Legacy Project.

Each year, the concept for the Legacy Project is introduced to the class at the opening Retreat. Year after year, the reaction is the same – wide-eyed wonder and optimism mixed with a little fear and trepidation. Yet, in the end, every class completing a Legacy Project concurs that the effort was worthwhile. “Every class that has participated in a Legacy Project seems to build stronger connections and have a growing desire to impact our community for good,” added Michael Hutcheson, Leadership Rockdale Planning Team and Class of 2010.

Graduates each year remark that working together on the Legacy Project and having something to look back on after it’s over is one of the most meaningful activities in which they have ever participated. There is pride in accomplishment and joy in knowing they have left a positive mark on the community. As Rebeca Gibbons, Class of 2020, said, “It’s amazing how a small group of dedicated people, even during a pandemic as was the case for our class, can make such a big impact in our community.”





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A Place to Call Home

When you've been around for 70 years, you might need to move from time-to-time to accommodate your expanding family. Likewise, the Chamber has enjoyed a few "homes" over its lifetime.

Currently located at 936 Green Street, the Chamber purchased its current headquarters in 2012 and moved in during the spring of 2013. Lorraine Harrison, 2012 Chamber Board Chair, said she considered the acquisition of the building to be a great accomplishment for the Chamber. "Having a dedicated meeting space enables the Chamber to better serve its members by hosting educational classes, networking activities, and board and committee discussions at a central location."

With the Chamber, the Conyers Rockdale Economic Development Council (CREDC) was able to expand into the Chamber's new building. Thua G. Barlay, 2013 Chamber Board Chair, added, "This space provides the Chamber and CREDC staff ample working space and much-needed privacy for confidential meetings with prospects and members."

The Chamber and CREDC share the top floor of the two-story, 8,000 square foot facility while tenants lease space on the bottom floor. Board member and 2011 Chamber Board Chair Mo Talley, who headed the Chamber committee that led the purchase effort, said the new location "is an asset to the Olde Town business district and specifically the Chamber, CREDC, Rockdale County, and City of Conyers."

The Chamber was first housed in the Mid-Georgia Gas Company, which was eventually bought by Atlanta Gas Light, and located on West Avenue. On September 23, 1971, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for a new office building for the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce at 1200 West Avenue near Interstate 20.

In the early-1980s, the Chamber relocated to a small wood-frame house on Scott Street in front of what is currently the City of Conyers Police Headquarters. Around 1986, the City of Conyers built a 2,000 square foot brick building on Scott Street next to the Fire Station and adjacent to where Conyers City Hall was located at the time to house the Chamber offices. This building served as the Chamber's headquarters for nearly 26 years until acquiring its current facility.



Top Photo: The Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce Building 936 Green Street.

Above: Chamber Staff Member Charles Walker shows Ed Cowan around the new Chamber Offices during the reception celebrating the opening of the new headquarters building in April 2013.

Our Chamber Volunteers Are **ROCK SOLID**

Like the granite that rests beneath the red clay topsoil that covers the county, volunteers have served as the rock-solid foundation for the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce since its inception. The leaders who recognized the need for and then organized the Chamber were volunteers. The board members who have governed the Chamber these past 70 years are volunteers. The men and women who have served and are serving on councils, committees, programs, events, and other activities are volunteers. Literally every aspect of Chamber work is supplied and sustained with the energy, expertise, and enthusiasm of countless volunteers.

Supported by a team of talented and dedicated staff, volunteers are essential to the Chamber's mission and program of work. Established to be the voice for business and promote economic growth and development, Chamber members and volunteers understand that the quality of life in a community has a direct impact on economic vitality. The like-minded individuals who support the Chamber through volunteerism recognize that there is unity in the community when they work together to achieve a common goal. Over the years, Chamber volunteers have identified needs and developed solutions to benefit the citizens of Conyers/Rockdale County. They have contributed countless hours of service to improve the well-being of this community and its citizens.

Whatever the role – Ambassador, Board Member, Committee Chair, Committee Member, Program Facilitator, Leads Group – volunteers are the backbone of the Chamber. The service they provide moves the Chamber and our community forward.

Thank you to all who have served as a Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce Volunteer. We appreciate you.



*Above right: We3 Volunteers Joy Douglass and Frances Oglesby
Middle right: Leadership Rockdale Facilitators Scot Ward, Katy Zahradnik, Claire Cline, Jason Redmond, Susan Paul Smith, and 2024 Chamber Chair Steve Bromell
Bottom right: Chamber Ambassador Co-Chairs Bridget Benito and Jason Bryant
Left: 2015 We3 Volunteer Team
Middle: 2019 Chamber Chair Faye Phillips
Right: Chamber Ambassadors Faith Bratlie and Jason Witcher at the 2020 Annual Meeting*



Benefits of Membership

Being a part of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber has opened doors to opportunities we couldn't have imagined. The support we have received from fellow members and the staff have been exceptional. Their tireless efforts and dedication have made a significant difference in the success of our business. The resources and relationships are priceless and their advocacy for the local business community is truly remarkable. The Chamber has not only helped us grow our business but has also allowed us to give back to the community. It's a win-win relationship.

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Chambers of commerce exist all over the world. By definition, a chamber of commerce is an association or network of business people designed to promote and protect the interests of its members. In other words – Members First! To remain viable, chambers must provide members with a sound return on their investment. The Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce has been supporting its members – and the community at large – for 70 years. To be relevant for so long, the Chamber has had to adapt to the ever-changing needs of its members.

“Chamber programs and events offer relevant information for businesses, provide excellent networking opportunities, and encourage members to get involved in the community,” explains Faye Phillips, 2019 Board Chair. Over the years, programs and activities have come and gone as the interests and needs of members and the community have evolved; however, some of the more enduring membership initiatives include the Annual Meeting, Monthly Network Luncheon, Leads Groups, Business Expos, and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremonies.

Ribbon cutting and ground-breaking ceremonies have been synonymous with chambers of commerce since they began. From the earliest days of the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce, these activities have symbolized new beginnings and a brighter future filled with possibilities. They honor the people who have the vision and energy to bring business and industry to our community and establish a place for commerce, growth, and development. Shovels festooned with bows and a billowing ribbon stretched across a doorway ready to be cut with giant scissors, signify that progress is proceeding.



Top: Congressman James A. Mackay cuts the ribbon to officially open the C&D Battery Plant in Conyers on October 20, 1965.

Middle: City, County, and Chamber leaders join executives from Eastmore, a mixed-use development, for a groundbreaking ceremony on March 22, 2017.

Bottom: Chamber Ambassadors support Thomas Williams Management at a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 18, 2022.

One of the greatest benefits of Chamber membership is having the opportunity to meet businesspeople from a variety of industries who share a common desire to be successful and help the community thrive. To promote connections and enhance business visibility, the Chamber has offered networking opportunities throughout its 70-year history.

From coffee in the morning to cocktails in the evening, there have been occasions for conversation and collaboration. The Chamber's monthly Network Luncheon has been a regular feature for more than

25 years because attendees find it to be a valuable resource for their business development. Small group gatherings in the form of Jump Start Your Morning events, Leads Groups, Morning Motivators, Empower Hour, or Biscuits & Benefits offer information sharing and networking.

A time-honored tradition, the Chamber's Annual Meeting provides the ideal platform to celebrate the accomplishments of individuals or groups within the Chamber. Recapping the previous year by acknowledging successes achieved, recognizing the hard work and commitment of its members and staff, and honoring exceptional performance among volunteers provides another excellent networking opportunity.

While the Annual Meeting in recent years has been held at the Georgia International Horse Park (GIHP) as a lunch event, at other times in years past, it was held as an informal, picnic-style gathering. Regardless of the format, the Annual Meeting features the passing of the gavel signifying a change in leadership and setting of annual goals.

Establishing a new business plan each year keeps the Chamber viable to serve its members and community. In addition to focusing on membership development and expanding business and industry in Conyers/Rockdale County, the Chamber has been active in legislative affairs and educational efforts.



Top: Amber Jacobs with Poppin' Stop showcases her delicious popcorn treats at a we3 luncheon event.

Middle: Sylvia Cohen-Phillips poses with a student intern at her booth during the 2023 Business Expo.

Bottom: Chamber members Veronica Rhodes, Sherry Snipes, Latoya Ferguson, Donna Jackson, and Shaun Jackson enjoy networking at the 2023 Chamber Annual Meeting.

The Chamber monitors laws and regulations impacting business, meets regularly with local legislators, and represents the business perspective in conversations with the City of Conyers and Rockdale County governments.

The Chamber works closely with Rockdale County Public Schools as the quality of education in a community is a key factor when a business or industry is seeking to locate or expand in a community.

Promoting educational partnerships by marketing the RCPSpartner.com website enables Chamber members to support classroom needs and learn about various opportunities to get involved with the schools. The Chamber supports the goals of the Rockdale Career Academy and Rockdale County Public Schools Foundation by having representation on their respective boards. Since 2011, the school system has presented the Education Partner of the Year award at the Chamber's Annual Meeting.

The impact and influence of women in business continues to grow. Seeking to engage, educate and empower women in Conyers/Rockdale County, the Chamber started the "we3 program" in 2017.

Initially established as a single conference, we3 has grown to be a series of events and activities. With wide ranging topics and event days, times, and venues, the we3 program meets the varying needs of women in business. A highlight of the we3 program is the annual Woman of the Year recognition honoring a remarkable woman who makes a significant impact in the lives of other women.



Top: Muddessar Ahmad (center) receives the 2022 Education Partner of the Year Award from (L-R) Board of Education members Heather Duncan and Pam Brown, Superintendent Dr. Terry Oatts and 2022 Chamber Chair Darlene Hotchkiss.

Middle: Woman of the Year recipients (L-R) Susan Paul Smith (2019), Peggy Lawrence (2021), Yvette Morton Williams (2022), Auvronette Gilbeaux (2023), Lorraine Harrison (2018) and Jean (Yontz) Sprague (2017).

Bottom: We3 Volunteers (L-R): Michelle Kim, Dawn Wells, Dee Barnes, Arleisha Little, Faye Phillips, Jana Hise, Cheryl Young, Rosemarie Nowicki and Quadri Caldwell.



Whether you win or lose, everyone has a great time at the Chamber's Annual Golf Tournament. This much anticipated event is always a sell-out.

Income-producing programs that also provide outstanding networking opportunities while enjoying the great outdoors include the Annual Chamber Invitational Golf Tournament and Clays for Commerce Trap Shoot.

Golf enthusiasts have made the golf tournament a much-anticipated annual event since 1990.

For more than 30 years, the Chamber has benefitted

from the stable income earned. Clays for Commerce, started in 2017, grows more popular each year.

Whether networking with other Chamber members or team building, this competitive event supports Chamber programming. From programs to people, membership in the Conyers-Rockdale Chamber of Commerce continues to provide its members with great benefits.

I've been a member of the Chamber for six years. I plan on continuing my membership for as long as I'm in business. I love the way my community of small business owners come together of one accord to provide the community with valuable resources. I also love the way the Chamber provides us with resources to make sure that we are successful as entrepreneurs.

*Sherry Snipes,
Event Designs by Sherry*



2017 Chamber Chair Dee Barnes and 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Marty Jones enjoy a beautiful day outdoors at the Chamber's Annual Clays for Commerce Trap Shoot.

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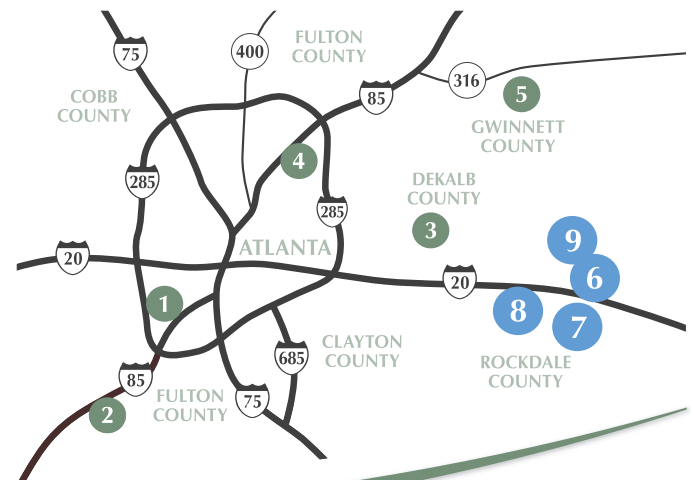
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INDEX of ADVERTISERS

Ashley Capital	69	Newton Homeopathics	67
BTM - Books, Taxes & More	69	Northside Hospital	11
Chick-fil-A Conyers	50	Olde Town Awards	48
City of Conyers	49	Peachtree Academy	58
Conyers Best Laundry	42	Piedmont Rockdale	34-35
Conyers Family Chiropractic Center	69	Poppin' Stop	42
Conyers Jewelers	41	Pratt Industries	50
Conyers Tire Company	59	Pro Cutters Landscapes	29
Corner Market / Eastmore	11	Rockdale Career Academy	49
Covington Family Chiropractic	48	Rockdale County Board of Commissioners	71
Cowan Ace Hardware	50	Rockdale County Public Schools	17
Delta Community Credit Union	42	Rocklyn Homes	68
CREDC	16	Scot Ward Funeral Services	28
Dart	69	Snapping Shoals EMC	10
Drummond	69	Still Lumber Company	69
Etienne Business Solutions	41	Summit Grove	Back Cover
Evans Tool & Die	2	Sweet Psalms Florist	59
Faith Insurance Solutions	69	Synovus	48
Georgia United Credit Union	58	The Tabb Insurance Agency	41
Greystone OB/GYN	67		
Hedrick Family Dentistry	59		
High Priority Plumbing and Services	3		
Jason Bryant State Farm Insurance	69		
Keenan Media	58		
Keller Williams - Christie Phillips	50		
Kumon	42		
LegalShield - Willie Washington	59		
LioChem	16		
Monastery of the Holy Spirit	43		
My Limitless Growth, LLC	69		

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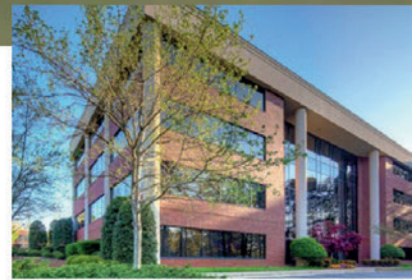
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