A Letter From the President

I t is that time of the year when the weather shifts and Spring is in the air which means we are gearing up for a busy time in the Chamber and in our community. We just kicked off the rodeo and fair season with the Go Texan Parade in downtown Conroe with over 140 entries this year. It was an honor to be a part of a parade with a great deal of our members participating and supporting the “Salute to our Scholars” themed event.

In addition, it is time to get OUT and VOTE. The Chamber has been very proactive in getting the word out on early voting sites and hosting political forums during our membership luncheons which provide an opportunity to meet and listen to the candidates.

Alexander Hamilton once said, “A share in the sovereignty of the state, which is exercised by the citizens at large, in voting at elections is one of the most important rights of the subject, and in a republic ought to stand foremost in the estimation of the law.” Please take advantage of this right we have and vote during the upcoming elections.

Our next political forum will be Tuesday, April 1st at 4:00 pm in conjunction with The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce. This forum will be for the special election for State Senate, District 4 and will be held at the Sam Houston State Building on the Lone Star College - Montgomery Campus on College Park Dr. (242).

Also during March, the Board of Directors and Chamber members will be starting the next phase of our Strategic Planning process which will allow us to prepare for the expected growth in our area. This process will consist of community focus groups and interviews with community leaders and representatives. Be on the lookout for these meeting notices.

Have a great month and get your tickets to our 2014 Tastefest event which will be held on Thursday, May 8th. We are running great early bird specials on tickets, so take advantage of those great offers. We wish you all the best.

Shop Local and Shop Chamber Members,

Scott Harper, President
Greater Conroe/Lake Conroe Area Chamber of Commerce

Scott Harper, President
Greater Conroe/Lake Conroe Area Chamber of Commerce
Emerald Club Chamber Members receive the greatest access to the Chamber and its valuable resources. To learn more about the benefits of this investment level, visit www.conroe.org/investment-levels or contact Cassandra Roschen at (936) 756-6644.
Calendar of Events

To register or get more information on Upcoming Events call (936) 756-6644, visit www.conroe.org, or listen online at www.irlonestar.com!

**MARCH 2014**

**MAR 6**

**Young Business Professionals Network**
**Next Level Speaker Series**
11:30AM - 1PM at Margarita & Peppers

**MAR 6**

**Business Connect Seminar**
12PM - 2PM at Chamber Office
“Four Ways to Increase Business Exposure and Leads”
Lunch provided. Reservation required. Register online.
See page 9 for more information.

**MAR 11**

**Explore: Making the Most of Your Membership**
**New Member Orientation**
8:30AM - 9:30AM at Chamber Office
Register online.

**MAR 12**

**Networking Breakfast**
7:30AM - 9AM at Cilantro’s in Montgomery
Paid event. Reservation required. Register online.

**MAR 20**

**Business After Hours**
5PM - 7PM at Black Forest Ventures: Galaxy FBO & Black Walnut Cafe
(in the Lone Star Executive Airport)

**MAR 21**

**ActionCOACH of North Houston**
11:30AM - 1PM at Conroe’s Incredible Pizza Company
“Effective Networking”
Free event. Reservation required.
Call (281) 602-8031 to register.
See page 9 for more information.

**MAR 26**

**Professional Connection**
5:30PM - 7PM at The Corner Pub

Save the Date - April 1st

**Senate District 4 Candidate Forum**
at Sam Houston State Building
on the Lone Star College - Montgomery Campus

www.conroe.org /gclacc  Download app at www.MyChamberApp.com
Thank you to everyone who came out to watch the 49th Go Texan Parade on February 22nd. The parade was a great success, put on by the Houston Metro Go Texan Committee Conroe/Willis/The Woodlands, to kick off the Texas rodeo season!
Ribbon Cuttings

Ryan's Family Steak House - Restaurant/Buffet/Steakhouse
(936) 756-2442 | www.ryans.com

The Woodlands Christian Academy - An independent, Christ-centered college preparatory school that integrates learning with biblical faith and challenges students to reach their highest potential - spiritually, academically, physically, and socially. (Grades Pre-K through 12th.)
(936) 273-2555 | nsievert@twca.net

TIRR Memorial Hermann Rehabilitation - TIRR Memorial Hermann, is the top-ranked rehabilitation hospital in the South, creating customized treatment plans for every patient, maximizing their recovery.
(713) 787-5942 | tirr.memorialhermann.org
February marked the first Next Level Speaker Series lunch for YBPN and was presented by BB&T. Jay Abiona with Credible Security Solutions was our guest speaker presenting, “Interview for Success: An Insider’s Approach to Reading Body Language”. Abiona discussed techniques on detecting deception and lies. He filled the room with over 30 young professionals in attendance.

The March Next Level Speaker Series speaker will be Gigi Woodruff, Senior Leadership Development Manager at YMCA of the USA, presenting, “Get Your Head & Heart in the Game”. We invite all young professionals ages 21-39 to join us at Margarita and Peppers on Thursday, March 6th from 11:30-1. This is a free event for Chamber members.

Diplomats of the Month

Pictured: Pat Brandt-First Choice Collision Ross Silva-Minuteman Press Caroline Mason-Whitestone Printing Henry Daniels-Certified Mortgage Professional for Conroe and the Woodlands

Denise Daniels-Avon Kevin Hemingway-Bookends Business Services Inc. Wayne Colby-Keller Williams Not Pictured: Brad Schlerf-Forensic Solutions

Member Spotlight

America’s Home Place, Inc.

America’s Home Place, Inc., one of the Chamber’s Emerald Club Members, recently completed renovations on their main office. The company has been around since 1972, when Barry Conner had a vision to provide custom home building at competitive prices. Now over four decades later, they are one of the largest independent custom home builders in south Texas.

Cassandra Roschen, Director of Membership Development at the Chamber, caught up with Brandon Wilkinson, Custom Home Builder at America’s Home Place, to learn more about the company’s latest project.

Cassandra: What did your remodel consist of?
Brandon: Our remodel was to better reflect our standard features offered in each of our custom homes. Some of these changes included, more tile in our homes in addition to a wider variety of tile options, new custom all-wood cabinetry with a broader selection in wood, style, and finishes. We also modified our showers, tub, counter tops, flooring, paint colors and lighting. We utilized the services of a professional decorator to assist in emphasizing our homes standard features.

Cassandra: Why did you feel that it was time to remodel?
Brandon: We recognize an ever-changing market of demands. Folks are looking to receive the best quality material and features in their new custom home, at the same time wanting all this at the best possible price. We all want the biggest bang for our buck. Through our purchasing agents and corporate purchasing power we have the ability to achieve just that. We have tremendous local trade partners that play a big part of our success as a company. We want our customers to get the most for their money and the remodel has helped to better portray who we are and what we can offer as a company.

Cassandra: How has the remodel assisted with selling/representing America’s Home Place to customers?
Brandon: People are awed by what they recognize as a “standard” feature. Most customers walk in and have questions such as what this or that upgrade may cost them in their new home. It is fun for us to answer those questions with “it’s already included”.

Cassandra: What did you do with the items (furniture, fixtures, etc.) that you replaced?
Brandon: Anything that had value we donated to habitat for humanity, some items were also offered to our trade partners.

Cassandra: What has the response been to the remodel?
Brandon: We have seen a positive response. The proof is in the pudding. Sales are continuing to rise. Our customers who are building are thrilled with the reality of what features are standard in their homes. We are excited about the direction we are heading.

Cassandra: How has business changed since opening in summer 2012 in Conroe?
Brandon: Business in Conroe has been a blessing. Each month has been better than the last. For those who discover us, they are glad they found us. That has been one of the biggest challenges. Simply getting the word out that after 43 years in business we now have an America’s Home Place location right here in Conroe and building custom homes all around Montgomery County and beyond.

Cassandra: What are your next steps for America’s Home Place in Conroe?
Brandon: We have had great success with open houses on our custom homes. We plan to provide spec homes for the public to be able to see our product in its different stages of construction and with the right timing plan to open several model homes for our buyers to come and visit. Meanwhile, we will continue our operation and growth right here at our design center located at the Teas Crossing shopping center (next to the JCPenny and Olive Garden).

America’s Home Place provides quality service with a promise. Their warranty states that, “after you occupy your home, one of our most important jobs begins…Standing Behind Our Warranty…on your new home. We have a reputation for honoring our warranty and feel this is our greatest asset.”

Those considering building a custom home should take the opportunity to explore America’s design process, features and pricing. Their custom design service and building consultation is a free service offered to each client. Contact them today at (936) 647-1940 or officeconroe@americashomeplace.com.
this month at the Chamber University

Enhance your Education & Professional Development at Chamber University! All seminars and workshops are offered free of charge to Chamber Members and we encourage all to participate. Register at www.conroe.org.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 6TH**
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
*Business Connect Seminar*
"Four Ways to Increase Business Exposure and Leads"
As the growth continues to prevail great opportunities are available for local businesses to find more customers and to build their sales and profits. But it’s extremely important for the businesses to position themselves online so the customers can find them quickly and easily. Don’t let your competition get the first chance.

Siva Yenneti
President
*itvibes Design & Marketing*
siva@itvibes.com

**THURSDAY, MARCH 20TH**
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
*Lunch & Learn Workshop*
"Integrating Marketing & Sales"
This workshop is part of the continuing workshop in Integrated Marketing, Networking and Sales. In this month’s seminar Bruce May will be focusing on integrating winning marketing and sales tactics to help your business.

Bruce May
President and Executive Producer
*BizPerity Next Generation Marketing*
Host of Business Insights on WayMoreFM.com
bruce@businessinsightsradio.com

**FRIDAY, MARCH 21ST**
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
*ActionCOACH Seminar*
"Choose Me, Not My Competition"
Bob Keplinger hosts a free seminar on how your business can stand out amongst the competition. Please join us for an informative, fun, and free business building workshop at Conroe’s Incredible Pizza Company.

Bob Keplinger
Firm Owner
*actionCOACH*
bobkeplinger@actioncoach.com

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"Starting at LSC-Montgomery allowed me to study under world-class faculty and earn my degree debt free."
— Ellie Bledsoe, ’10 Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Houston-Downtown, ’12

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Open Doors
LoneStar.edu

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LoneStar.edu
Open Doors
Montgomery County, Texas – February 7, 2014 – The Leadership Montgomery County (LMC) Class of 2014 recently explored economic development in the county at their session on February 6, 2014. The session was sponsored by long-time supporters of Leadership Montgomery County, The Woodlands Township, with their special Economic Development Partnership with LMC.

Session Director Gil Staley planned the session for the class that began at The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce with a panel of Economic Development experts from throughout the county. The economic development panel consisted of Danielle Scheiner, Greater Conroe Economic Development Council; Nick Wolda, The Woodlands Township; Fred Welch, Greater Houston Partnership; Gil Staley, Economic Development Partnership; Ray Laughter, Lone Star College System; Steve Pilgrim, Entergy Texas; and J.R. Moore, Jr., Montgomery County Tax Assessor-Collector. Class members were given the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the panel throughout the morning.

The class also got to hear from companies that had moved to Montgomery County. Jan Sieving of Repsol USA and Tim Gearn of Gearn Offshore spoke to the class on what brought them to the community.

The class then held their leadership series discussion before traveling by chartered bus through Hughes Landing to see the new development. The class then traveled to the Anadarko Allison Tower for a presentation and a tour of the new Anadarko Hackett Tower. The day concluded back at The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce.

Leadership Montgomery County (LMC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to cultivating the future leaders of Montgomery County. The goal of the program is to educate and inform class members about major community issues, while inspiring and motivating individuals to exercise their leadership skills to benefit the community.

LMC is a joint project of the Greater Conroe/Lake Conroe Area Chamber of Commerce and The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce. The Magnolia Area Chamber of Commerce, the Community Chamber of East Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Hispanic Chamber are also participating Chambers in the LMC program. Participants are chosen by application process in June of each year.

For more information about Leadership Montgomery County, please visit LMCTX.org.

Bid! Bid! Buy!
It’s for a Good Cause!

The Greater Conroe/Lake Conroe Area Chamber of Commerce is again putting together a Buyers Group for the Montgomery County Fair Association auction this year. Participation in the group will be limited to members of the GC/LCACC.

Our members know that the youth of Montgomery County are an important part of this community. Consequently, there has always been a lot of interest in supporting the auction, but many have not been able to do so because of the high cost of the items auctioned. This is a way for all of our members to participate.

**ONLY THOSE MONIES DONATED SPECIFICALLY TO THE BUYERS GROUP WILL BE SPENT AT THE AUCTION. NO GENERAL FUNDS FROM GC/LCACC WILL BE USED.**

Donation of $100.00 or more will receive an invitation to the Buyer’s Party.

*All donations must be received at the Chamber office (P.O. Box 2347, Conroe 77305) no later than April 4, 2014.*

ALL DONATIONS WILL BE SPENT ON THE JUNIOR HOMEMAKING AND LIVESTOCK AUCTION DURING THE 2014 MONTGOMERY COUNTY FAIR.

For more information, please call Angela Storseth, Director of Program Development (936) 538-7111 | angelas@conroe.org
New Members

BACH, BEETHOVEN & BARBECUE

A slice of brisket with a side of Beethoven.

PRESENTED BY MONTGOMERY COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS SOCIETY

Join us Saturday, March 8, for a Texas-style BBQ, concert, and after-party, kicking off at 6 p.m. at Crighton Theatre in Conroe. Hear world-renowned music performed by young classical artists, ages 18 to 30, who are finalists and rising stars. Reservations required for BBQ (includes concert) or concert tickets only at 7:30 p.m. For tickets call 936-441-SHOW or go online to crightontheatre.com.

More information at 936-756-7017 or youngtexasartists.org.
May 8
5PM - 8PM
The Lone Star Convention Center

Only $100 for a Member Booth!*
Space is limited. Contact Angela today to reserve your booth.
(936) 538-7111 or AngelaS@conroe.org
(*Rate applicable to Food & Beverage companies only.)

THANK YOU

For hosting Business After Hours in February!
Join us this month as Lone Star Executive Airport’s newest addition hosts our March Business After Hours.
March 20th from 5pm-7pm
at Black Forest Ventures: Galaxy FBO & Black Walnut Cafe.

Early Voting
February 18th-28th
Primary Election Day
March 4th
Special Election
Early Voting
April 28th-May 6th
Election Day
May 10th