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Note from the Director

**WOW!** That's all I can say right now. It has been quite a ride. Things are moving in Wilcox County and we are excited about it. You have not heard from us in a while by way of a newsletter; because we have been so busy. It is hard work; but it is some of the best work in which I have been involved. Watching Wilcox County move forward is most rewarding. Please join us for this wonderful journey. There are numerous opportunities- Join the Chamber. Volunteer. Serve on a Committee. Move with us! Grow with us!  
Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews

It's Official-A New World Record!



Wilcox County, Alabama is now known all over the world as the place where the world-record alligator was captured. When Mandy and John Stokes, Kevin, Savannah and Parker Jenkins brought in the mammoth gator over a week ago, it caused excitement across the nation; making national news. It was slated to hold the new Alabama State record. Hundreds of spectators had rushed to the Roland Cooper State Park, on the morning of August 16th to witness the weigh-in; after James, "Big Daddy" Lawler related the proceedings on his weekly outdoor radio show. The Gator, which was caught in the Miller's Ferry section of the Alabama River, was weighed in at 1011.5 pounds. The days since its capture, it has been one of the most talked about topics in outdoor news and beyond.

On this past Friday morning, the huge animal, killed by Mandy Stokes and her crew, earned world record status after a pair of master measurers, John Chitwood and Randall Bush, from Safari Club International put a tape to its skin and head and came up with a total of 15 feet, 9 inches. That's 13 inches longer than the current SCI world record 14-foot, 8-inch gator killed by Thomas Bass of Trinity, Texas.

Big Daddy Lawler related our sentiments well, in his facebook post when he wrote , "Wilcox County Alabama is now the official home of the world's largest alligator. Destination for thousands of anglers, hunters, and outdoor enthusiast annually, Mandy & John Stokes, Kevin, Savannah, & Parker Jenkins have not only made us the most circulated outdoor news story of this decade, but have also caused a very bright light to shine on this county that cannot be dimmed."

In August 2011 Keith Fancher's 14-foot, 2-inch, 838-pound alligator , also captured in Wilcox County, stood as the largest hunter-killed gator in the state until the Stokes Gator. The Fancher Gator is currently on exhibit at the Gees Bend Ferry Terminal in Camden. The Fancher Gator will remain there through the first week or so in September due to the constant flow of visitors.



Ron Sparks to Speak at Chamber Membership Meeting

Ron Sparks, Director of the Alabama State office of Rural Development, will speak at the Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce Annual meeting. The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 23, 2014 at 5:00 p.m.; at Wilcox Central High School.

WACC is excited about his appearance at the meeting. Mr. Sparks has concern for rural Alabama and a real interest in development for such places as Wilcox County.

Summer 2014  
Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce  
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### Up-Coming Events

Black Belt Treasures Patchwork Festival  
9/13/2014

Wilcox Artworks Quilt Walk  
9/12-9/13, 2014

Brad Powe Memorial Wild Hog Rodeo  
9/11-9/13, 2014

Gees Bend Play  
9/13/2014

Pine Hill Depot Day  
9/20/2014

Pine Apple Promotions  
Hunter Appreciation Day  
11/29/2014

WACC Big Buck Contest  
10/25/2014-2/10/2015

WACC Christmas in Camden  
12/11/2014

## WACC Education Event focuses on Workforce Development



A capacity crowd gathered on August 21<sup>st</sup> for the annual WACC Education Event. The following panel members, moderated by John Matthews, shared information on workforce initiatives: Felecia Pettway-Wallace Community College, Wendy Padgett-Extension System, Richard Bryant-Ready to Work, Candace Burroughs and Linda Jones-Wilcox County Department of Human Resources and Joy Norsworthy-WilcoxWorks. WACC Ambassadors served as hosts and hostesses. Kelvin Lawrence/Subway sponsored the reception.



### City of Camden Partners with the Chamber

At its July 21st meeting, the Camden city council voted unanimously to bid on being the “Host City” for the Alabama Bass Trail for the April 25th, 2015 tournament. If selected, the city will contribute \$5000.00 with funds secured by tourism grants and other revenue sources. The 2014 tournament was hosted by the city of Monroeville, who is also bidding to host the 2015 tournament; but the City of Camden appears to have the leading edge due to surveys completed by 340 anglers last year which listed their biggest complaint as traveling to Monroeville on Friday night before the tournament for the mandatory registration/information meeting. In 2014, the ABT brought 170 boats/340 anglers to the Camden-Wilcox County Area generating well over \$150,000 to the local economy.

Kay Donaldson, Director of the Alabama Bass Trail had this to say when she was notified of the city council’s decision, “I am so excited, from the first time I visited Camden I knew this was a special place, a community with heart and grit to get things done. This community embraced the ABT and our anglers and we are thrilled to come back next year. I would like to personally thank Fran Cook, Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews and Big Daddy Lawler for working closely with the city council to get this approved.”

The 2015 ABT tournament promises to be even BIGGER and with the city on board as the host city even BETTER! Thank you to Mayor Baggett and the council members for supporting this great economically boosting event.

By: *Fran Gaston-Cook*

#### Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce Volunteer Program

If interested in volunteering in the following areas: Office Support; Tour Guides; Events; Marketing & Publicity; New Resident & Tourism Welcome Committee. Please contact Kristin Law at 682-9878 or Sheryl T. Matthews at -682-4929.



### Former WACC Ambassadors Continue to Serve

Two members of the first class of Wilcox Area Chamber Ambassadors have been selected as ambassador at their institutions of higher learning. Farrah Gaston at Troy University and Jamaris Autry at Alabama State University.

Trojan Ambassadors are the official Troy University hosts/hostesses for Chancellor's receptions and activities, athletic events, and organizational events. They also give tours on Trojan Days and other large tour days throughout the year. Out of over 7,200 students, around 80 apply to this program, and only about 30 are selected.

Farrah feels that, “Being an ambassador for Wilcox County was great because I really enjoyed getting to show others why I loved it so much. I knew that when I came to Troy and fell in love with it that I wanted to be able to share that love with others just like I did in Camden.”

According to Jamaris "Being selected as a Golden Ambassador was more than a privilege; it was a surprised blessing. At Alabama State University, we believe in every student having an "IT" moment to say that this is the moment that made each of us know that we are made to be an ASU Hornet. With that being said, my "IT" moment was being selected as a Golden Ambassador to serve, lead, protect our brand, and live up to the Black & Gold Standard of my great institution, Alabama State University where Opportunity is HERE. Being a WACC Ambassador made me have more confidence that I would achieve the position of becoming a Golden Ambassador.”



Jamaris Autry showing that ASU Golden Ambassador pride.



Farrah Gaston(left) at Troy University's Chancellor's home during graduation.

### Chamber Ambassador Applications Open

Applications for the 2014-15 class of Chamber Ambassadors are being accepted through September 5th. 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, who are interested in an excellent opportunity to serve in leadership positions and would like to assist in promoting Wilcox County, can get an application from the counselor's office at Wilcox Academy or Wilcox Central High School or from the Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce Office. Call 334-682-4929 for details.

**Applications are due in the Chamber office by September 5<sup>th</sup>.**

#### VILLAGE PROFILE COMING SOON

Watch out for the release of Wilcox Area Chamber of Commerce Village Profile Community Profile. For months, we have been busy gathering photos and information on the many Wilcox attractions. The community profile will be widely- circulated in print and on-line.

Submit an Event

Visit the Wilcox Area Chamber website at [www.wilcoxareachamber.com](http://www.wilcoxareachamber.com) to submit your event. It is an easy process and great way to publicize them. You will find the “Submit an Event” button, as well as instructions, on the Chamber home page.