

*Dublin-Laurens County Chamber of Commerce*  
*~Celebrating 100 years of service to the community~*



## **2010 - 2011 Annual Report**

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Mission Statement:

“To make Dublin-Laurens County a better place to live, work, play, and retire.”



Serving: Cadwell, Dexter, Dublin, Dudley, East Dublin, Montrose, and Rentz

## *DUBLIN-LAURENS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SERVICE*

### **Boosting Dublin and Laurens County For A Century**



By SCOTT B.  
THOMPSON, SR.

(Article Published May, 21, 2011 - Courtesy of [The Courier Herald](#))

Once upon a time, just about a century ago, Dublin's people boasted that they came from "Dublin, Georgia - the only town in Georgia that's doublin' all the time." This proud proclamation was a reference to the meteoric rise of the town's population of about 400 in the mid-1880s to become one the state's top ten cities in population in merely a quarter of a century. Right in step, the county's population boomed nearly 400 percent in 40 years. To maintain this unprecedented growth, the city needed just the right person to lead the divergent business interests in the city into a single forward-minded alliance. And, one hundred years ago this week, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce was born. A decade or so before, when the century turned, the Young Men's Business League was formed to take the city a notch or two up the ladder to metropolitan heights. Dublin was growing, but the community's leaders knew that in order to keep growing, more investments would need to be made, not only in the field of agriculture and agribusiness, but advancements in education, culture, and a better quality of life. A mass meeting of Dublin's leading businessmen was held on the evening of March 23, 1911. The meeting was called to order by banking magnate John M. Williams, who turned over the gavel to Judge J.E. Burch, who acted as chairman of the meeting. E.H. Hyman chastised those present to cease being "tight wads" and join in the movement. A "who's who" of Dublin's leading businessmen were named to the chamber's first board of directors. The board was composed of R.M. Arnau, D.S. Brandon, John M. Williams, Frank G. Corker, J.M. Finn, C.H. Kittrell, T.W. Hooks, H.M. Stanley, M.V. Mahoney, H.G. Stevens, Leo P. Baum, W.F. Schaufele, R.F. Deese, J.S. Simons, Izzie Bashinski, J.A. Kelley, and F.H. Rowe.

The chamber's directors hired Robert M. Martin, former city editor of the Savannah Press, to coordinate and focus the various business interests in a single direction. Martin set up his office in the New Dublin Hotel in a room which adjoined the lobby. On the top of the list for economic development projects was the development of modern highways through Dublin. Just two months after the chamber was organized, members set out in cars to scout the best routes to adjoining county seats. With a decent road along the "Old Macon Road" and an acceptable one to Statesboro already in place, road backers were confident that the Macon to Savannah highway would be a sure thing. By the middle of the decade, the chamber was pushing very hard to secure the location of U.S. Highway 80 through the center of town. By the mid 1920s when the highway was the primary east-west highway across the state and the Southeast, chamber officials instituted a project to construct a modern hotel along the route in the center of the city. The city's newest hotel was named the Fred Roberts Hotel in honor of the chairman of the committee, who died during its construction. An early project was the construction of a major power line from Dublin to the Central Georgia Power Company dam and electric plant in Jackson, Georgia. The chamber channeled a lot of efforts into improving navigation along the Oconee River.



The chamber worked for an entire decade to establish a "big city" hospital to provide the best medical care available in this section of Georgia. The first two fund raising projects of the chamber were an auto race in the city and a large bar-b-que at East Lake on the Fourth of July. When the chamber was organized, Laurens County was at the top of the state in the production of cotton. In fact, that year the county set an all time state record which stood until the late 1990s when machine operated mega farms broke the record of 60,000 bales. With the invasion of the deadly boll weevil which destroyed the cotton crops for several years, the chamber worked with farmers in diversifying the crops and to provide information on newer and better methods of improving agricultural production, soil conservation, and marketing strategies.

In the spring of 1914, the city's businessmen gathered in the Bertha Theater to reorganize the chamber of commerce. Those in attendance were entertained with a movie and plenty of locally produced Chero-Cola. At least \$8,000 in memberships were subscribed. The new organization would be governed by commissioners at large. Izzie Bashinski oversaw the organization, while D.S. Brandon (Business Development,) R.F. Deese (Retail Trade,) R.M. Arnau (Public Affairs,) and W.B. Rice (Agricultural Development) headed the chamber's departments. Charles Caldwell served as secretary for two years until 1916, when he was replaced by former Dublin High School principal N.G. Bartlett, who served until 1922, when he was replaced by W.H. Proctor. Finally on the evening of November 12, 1914, the Dublin and Laurens County Chamber was organized in Dublin's city hall. Frank G. Corker, president of the 1st National Bank, was elected president. Stephen J. Lord was elected vice president. Con A. Weddington accepted the office of temporary secretary. In February 1921, the chamber sponsored "The Farmers' Institute" to promote increased production of peanuts, sweet potatoes, livestock and poultry. Other agri-business projects were the location of a grain elevator, creamery, a meat curing plant, poultry clubs, and a dairy institute. Within a decade of the chamber's formation, Laurens County, with leadership from chamber supporters, became one of the leading counties in the state in the production of hogs and poultry. When women received the right to vote in the early 1920s, the chamber moved forward by inviting all women interested in promoting the local economy to attend a mass meeting in the fall of 1922. For the first time, women were invited to join the organization. The male-dominated organization established at least one committee which would be controlled by the chamber's female members. This year, the Dublin-Laurens Chamber of Commerce celebrates one hundred years of boosting Dublin and Laurens County. The efforts of thousands of the organization's members over the last century have led to our community to become one of the best places in Georgia to live.

*David Roberts, Chairman 2010-2011*



Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Chairman this past year, especially to be able to serve in the Chamber's 100th year of service to Dublin and Laurens County. I cannot thank Ms. Willie, Malehia, and now Sarah, enough for their hard work and dedication to make this community such a special place to live, work, play and retire.

To the Board members: thank you for your willingness to serve this community and its citizens. Your selfless acts of service are a testament to the passion you display every day to make this community what it is today. At the 59th Annual Meeting, we spoke of the past service of business leaders like you who helped shape Dublin and Laurens County. Hopefully, 100 years from now they will recall your names at the 2111 Bicentennial Annual Meeting.

This year, we have laid the groundwork for continued growth in the 21st century. The new website is complete and on-line for the world to see. Our new Facebook page is growing and ready to become the "Town Crier" for events all around Dublin and Laurens County. We have supported the Development Authority as they seek to bring more jobs to our area, and with the realignment of Tourism into a separate entity, the Chamber will also support those efforts to bring more Tourism dollars to our area.

As I pass the gavel to Ted and the rest of the Board, I know the Chamber continues to be in good hands now and into the future.

- David Roberts

## **2010 - 2011 Board Members**



**Pictured L-R:** Larry Drew, Dr. Fred Williams, Rob Cook, Roger Miller, John Mark Butler, Erwin Orr, David Gay, Jep Craig, Chris Cook, Jay Studstill, Bubba East, Ted Short, Audrey Hogan, George Roussel, David Roberts, Spencer Tydings

**Not pictured:** Susan Brandon, Carol Porter, Dan Rowe, Pam Green, Phil Patel, Bill Brown



**Staff: (L-R)** Malehia Young, Office Manager; Luisa Sancé, Membership & Marketing Coordinator; Sarah Brown, Receptionist; Ms. Willie Paulk, President



*Jep Craig, Vice Chairman of Community Development*

Over the past year, Community Development Programs at your Chamber have strived to promote community projects by developing a culture of balance for all ages and ethnic backgrounds. Community Development Programs also strive to promote a unique environment that comes from diversification in education and local projects for all ages.

Dublin and Laurens county residents enjoy a unique environment and vibrant lifestyle to include students, workforce, and retirees. Clean and safe neighborhoods where neighbors are closely connected make it rewarding to nourish and raise a family. Annually, the focus of the Community Development Committee has been to be an avid supporter of education, agribusiness ventures, promoting new and existing industry, Chamber networking events, and military affairs—just to name a few.

The community Development Committee has a long history of collaborating to improve and promote business expansion and economic development, interface with education opportunities, recognize and honor today's students who will be tomorrow's leaders, and promote workforce development and public affairs. The years ahead provide many opportunities and challenges for our communities and the Dublin-Laurens County Chamber stands strong to continue its legacy of excelling for the people of Dublin and Laurens County.

The teamwork of this committee exemplifies the success that Laurens County enjoys and is credited to the chairs of the following committees: the Education Committee, chaired by David Gay, hosts special events such as the Annual Honors Reception and Student of the Quarter; the Existing Industries Committee chaired by Mrs. Marcia Dixon, Industry Appreciation Day co-chaired by John Mark Butler, Rob Miller and Chuck Bass; the Agribusiness Committee chaired by Dan Rowe; the Governmental Affairs Committee chaired by Don Avery; the Community Retreat chaired by Jeff Cannon; the Main Street Program and Keep Dublin-Laurens Beautiful Committees both chaired by Erwin Orr. "Individuals play the game but teams win championships."

- Jep Craig



### *George Roussel, Vice Chairman of Tourism*

We welcomed Paul Gleeson, General Consul of Ireland, to Dublin on January 18, 2011. He spent the day visiting with Chamber, City and County officials, touring the community, the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center, and the Fairview Park Hospital. He concluded his visit by attending the January Business after Hours in the McGrath Keen Sr. Conference Center. Mr. Gleeson was very complimentary of the community stating he would like to see more exchanges between Dublin, Ireland and Dublin, Georgia, with particular emphasis on the St. Patrick's Festival. We told him of the City of Dublin's Bicentennial Celebration planned for 2012 and invited him to come and be a part of this festivity.

As a follow up to Mr. Gleeson's visit, Willie was invited to attend a luncheon in honor of the Ambassador to Ireland to the United States, His Excellency Michael Collins, in Atlanta on February 10, 2011. One of the people seated with her was Karl Drake, a native of Dublin, Ireland, owner of the Drake School of Irish Dance, in Atlanta. The Chamber has been discussing with Mr. Drake the possibility of a performance in Dublin on March 12, 2012, to help celebrate the City of Dublin's Bicentennial Celebration. More information will be forthcoming as all Bicentennial Celebration plans develop.

The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Irish Chamber Breakfast was held on March 15, 2011 featuring "A Salute to the NFL" honoring three local NFL players: Erik Walden, Green Bay Packers; Demaritus Thomas "Bay Bay," Denver Broncos; and Ben Claxton, Arizona Cardinals.

At the request of the Chamber, Dublin was selected by Bruce Green, Director of Tourism Product Development, Georgia Department of Economic Development and his team, as one of five communities in Georgia, to be part of a study by the GDEcD team. The goal of this study is to increase investment and development of new tourism products and to add depth and breadth to Dublin's visitor experience. After reviewing the 102 page report, Mr. Green stated:

*"Dublin and Laurens County have rich historical and natural resources that can be strategically developed and marketed to expand tourism as a significant part of the overall economic development portfolio of this community. The Department and the Team stand ready to help as the local leaders undertake the recommendations offered with the Resource Team Report."*

Plans are being formulated to utilize this information to achieve our goal of enhancing the tourism opportunities in our community.

One of our yearly goals is to attract more visitors. This year we successfully attracted many visitors from across the state through the First Annual Moore Station Village Car Show; Paddle Georgia, a canoe kayak excursion on the Oconee River; Bobberthon Fishing Tournament at the Hugh Gillis Public Fishing Lake; B.R.A.G. (Bicycle Ride Across Georgia) who spent two days in Dublin at the Dublin High School Gym and was voted by B.R.A.G. participants as the best overnight campsite!

Along with Leadership Dublin Laurens County, The Courier Herald, and Y96 the Chamber co-sponsored in bringing in Christian/Country Music Star, John Berry, to Theatre Dublin. This successful event has created the opportunity for John to return to Dublin in 2012 with a Christmas Show. More information will be forthcoming regarding this event.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Redneck Games were held at Buckeye Park with several thousand in attendance. Over \$4,000 were raised and distributed to those projects which are supported by the East Dublin Lions Club.

These, were only a few of the many events that were held in our community during this past year, generating tourism dollars. Also, over 3,500 people visited our Welcome Center during the year. People traveling from out of town for work, medical care, educational, recreational and shopping opportunities, also added to the \$60,680,000 tourism economic impact for Laurens County.

-George Roussel



*Ted Short, Vice Chairman of Membership Services and Chairman Elect*

The mission of membership services in the 2010-2011 program year was to create a better understanding of the Chamber of Commerce with its members and broaden the base through new members by creating a more informed/involved membership. I am proud to report that this was accomplished through the efforts and dedication of our faithful membership. Despite difficult economic times you have worked hand in hand to make our business community strong and Dublin – Laurens County a better place to “Live, Work, Play and Retire.” I want to thank you for your support of the Dublin – Laurens Chamber of Commerce.

During our half-day Membership Blitz, Co-Chaired by Susan Brandon and Chris Cook, we netted 26 new members bringing in \$5,251.45! We also had the honor of participating in 22 ribbon cuttings. These are exciting events as they represent confidence and growth in our local economy. These businesses created 257 new jobs in our area. We welcome these new members and ask your support of fellow Chamber members.

Business and Breakfast received excellent support from our Chamber family with an average attendance of 99. Likewise Business after Hours continues to be a very successful event with an average of 147 in attendance during this past year. These are excellent forums to showcase your business and network with fellow Chamber members. We wish to thank those members that have hosted these events over the past year.

Rob Cook chaired a very successful 10<sup>th</sup> annual membership appreciation luncheon. Through your participation and efforts we contributed much needed medical supplies to the local school nurses.

Audrey Hogan chaired our Technology/Telecommunications Committee. Her committee has done an excellent job in developing of new chamber website. This web site will become the electronic front door to our Chamber and Community. It will serve as a means for our membership to introduce the world to Dublin – Laurens County as a place to “Live, Work, Play and Retire.”

Our 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was Chaired by Susan Brandon at the Dublin Country Club on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. It was a wonderful event that capped the year of our friend and Chairman David Roberts. We want to thank David for his leadership over the past year.

I want to thank the membership for your dedication and hard work in supporting the Dublin –Laurens Chamber of Commerce over this past year. Your efforts have made our community the finest area to live and do business.

-Ted Short



## *Jay Studstill, Immediate Past Chair*

Being a Chamber member sure is fun!

Willie, thank you for your leadership. We've had so much fun and enjoyment serving on your Chamber Board and appreciate your willingness to let us do things a little differently like the videos highlighting our year and the sing-

ing recognition for the 100 years of the Chamber. The friendships we've made are special, and we enjoyed the many hats we got to wear as Board members.

If you were unable to attend this year's Annual Meeting, you certainly missed a real treat and a good time. David and his team did an outstanding job of providing good food, information and recognition, and of course, **GREAT** entertainment to focus on the Chamber's 100 years. We can all agree we have outstanding talent in our community and that surely makes Laurens County a great place to live!

It is evident that Ted Short has created a plan to make our Chamber even more enjoyable and fun next year, and you'll want to be a part of it. Be sure to attend all the Business and Breakfasts and Business after Hours 'cause you never know when the "man with the hats" will show up!

May God Bless you all! - Jay Studstill



## *Spencer L. Tydings, Treasurer*

The Chamber has remained financially strong during these challenging economic times. The Chamber staff has been vigilant in the Chamber's pursuit to be good stewards of the resources provided by our members and the community. The staff and volunteers have worked to maintain membership and provide the best possible services to current members. Under the direction of Chairman Roberts, the Chamber now has a Web Site that any Chamber would envy. The Web Site is poised to provide more services to the business community and help grow the revenues of the Chamber.

General membership numbers remained consistent while the Chamber's portion of the City's hotel/motel tax receipts were down during the fiscal year. While revenues were down, the Chamber staff has worked very hard to control expenses and as a result, the Chamber remained fiscally sound year end October 31, 2011.

Thank you for supporting the Chamber financially. The Chamber will continue to support the business community through educational programs and community events. Your investment to the Chamber will continue providing a leadership partnership for a healthy and progressive business environment in the Dublin-Laurens County area.

- Spencer Tydings



## *Ms. Willie Paulk, Chamber President*

Dear Chamber Member:

I recently spoke with a group of students discussing the community and economic development of our community over the past 22 years. These were 16 and 17 year olds and I was speaking of things that happened before they were even born.

I sensed how they felt, when I read the *Courier - Herald's* special edition of the Chamber celebrating 100 years of service dated May 21, 2011. It is a great story that details how the Chamber has been a leader in the growth and changes in Laurens County. My hope was that those students would feel the great sense of pride I felt when I read the 100 year history and how thankful I continue to be for all who have worked so hard in making this community a great place to live, work, play and retire! A great big "thank you" to the *Courier - Herald* and to Scott Thompson Sr., for collecting and writing this valuable historical masterpiece.

David Roberts wanted to continue this 100 year celebration at our Annual Meeting. If you attended the meeting, you know it was a success. Those who were instrumental in helping David make it an event that some say "was the best ever" were: Susan Brandon, Carol Porter, Henry King, Michael Dukes and the Eight Track/Flashback, Don Thompson, Malehia Young, Meda Hester, Kathy Jones, Kelly Knight, Alexis Brandon, Mara Fountain, Rachel Barbee, Jeff Allbright and the staff of the Dublin Country Club. Thank you for making our 59th Annual Membership Meeting so memorable.

A lot of time has been spent in revitalizing our website - [www.dublin-georgia.com](http://www.dublin-georgia.com) - to make it easier to navigate and obtain information in a timely and efficient manner. Please critique it and let us know your thoughts. Our sincere thanks to Audrey Hogan and David Roberts for their guidance.

There have been changes to our Chamber staff; Kim Simmons and Katy Morton, are no longer with us. Kim has moved back to her home town of Athens, Georgia, and Katy is now an employee of the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Development Center. Prior to their departure, we thanked them for their many years of service and teamwork and wished them much success in their new endeavors.

With these staff changes, my Office Manager and Administrative Assistant, Malehia Young, stayed "steady in the boat" performing many extra duties to make sure that we didn't "miss a beat" in completing our 2010-2011 Program of Work. I applaud her for her hard work, perseverance, and professionalism.

We welcome two ladies to our team: Sarah Brown, a night student at Middle Georgia College, is our Receptionist, and Luisa Sancé, is our Membership and Marketing Coordinator.

We are blessed to live in this community with so many people who volunteer their time and talent in order to make our community prosper and grow. During these challenging economic times, we must work even harder to continue this legacy for the next 100 years.

My sincere thank you to: David Roberts, Chair; the Executive Committee, Board Committees, and staff for your dedication and leadership. It is a privilege and honor to serve as your President.

- Ms. Willie Paulk

# *Achievements*

## US Chamber of Commerce Accreditation

Accreditation with the United States Chamber of Commerce is the only program of its kind that defines excellence in chamber planning and recognizes chambers for outstanding contributions toward positive change in their communities. The purpose of the U.S. Chamber's Accreditation Program is to facilitate continuing excellence in the chamber industry and to foster a pro-business environment across America (<http://www.uschamber.com/chambers/accreditation>).



## GACCE Announces First Class of Georgia Certified Chambers

With over 150 chambers in the State of Georgia, the Dublin-Laurens Chamber was among the 25 chambers that were recognized during the 2011 GACCE Leadership Conference, as Georgia Certified Chambers received a prestigious honor that distinguishes the high quality, expertise, and strong leadership displayed by accredited chambers.



# Dublin-Laurens County

## Chamber of Commerce

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1200 Bellevue Avenue • P.O. Box 818 • Dublin, GA 31040-0818

Email: [chamber@dublin-georgia.com](mailto:chamber@dublin-georgia.com) Website: [www.dublin-georgia.com](http://www.dublin-georgia.com)

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