

The Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism host Leadership Cherokee. The mission of the program is to seek *out existing and emerging leaders from diverse backgrounds and offer them an educational experience to expose them to various aspects of the community.*

(A special thank you to everyone who participates in the program as a student, speaker and supporter.)

Leadership Cherokee is a seven month program. This year's class members consists of: Terry Long, Cherokee Medical Center; Susie Surret, Town Cedar Bluff; Deb Littlejohn, Cherokee County Health & Rehab; Suzanne Bishop, Cherokee County Board of Education; Johna Lindsey, Gadsden State Cherokee; Pam Clough, Gadsden State Community College; Charlia Pierce, Alabama Teachers Credit Union; Bryan Dorsett, Alabama Teachers Credit Union; Tim Marton, Bartley Realty; John Hyatt, the Bluffs Development; Anita Nation, Cherokee County Career & Tech School; Daniel Steele, Cherokee County Commission.



Class members pictured left to right: Charlia Pierce, Bryan Dorsett, Daniel Steele, Suzanne Bishop, John Hyatt, Johna Lindsey, Pam Clough, Terry Long, Susie Surret, Anita Nation, Tim Martin, & Thereasa Hulgan. Not pictured Deb Littlejohn

September: "Get Acquainted Day" began at the Chamber office with class members participating in name games and Cherokee County trivia. The day continued at the Judges House where class members participated in Leadership games, activities, and lunch.

"A Vision is worth a thousand words." Class members created a mural of pictures of where they see Cherokee County in 5 and 10 years, and discussed obstacles we are facing locally to achieve them.

Homework: Listen when out in the community as to what people are saying about Cherokee County, to be discussed at the October meeting.

## October meeting:

Focused on Agriculture and Tourism. The day began at the Chamber office with some leadership activities. We discussed what class members had heard out in the community:

- more restaurants with evening hours
- getting younger people more involved in Community clubs, activities, and politics
- improvement in the infrastructure of the County
- getting Weiss Lake winter pool raised

From there we met with Beth Farmer at the USDA Farm Center office. Beth updated our group on the Farmers in our area and the crops being raised in Cherokee County. She also talked about the many programs they have including Farm City Days, which is held each year for Cherokee County students.



We toured the Cherokee Gin where we saw firsthand how Cotton is processed. Rich Lindsey, Gin Manager, spent time educating our group about the Cotton Industry in Cherokee County, the State of Alabama and the US as a whole. He also touched on the World Cotton Crop and how it affects all of us. Over the past few years, the Gin has become modernized for efficiency and speed. Representative Richard Lindsey also spent some time with our group at the Gin.

We ate lunch at Lanny's and traveled to Orbix Hot Glass. Cal Breed, owner, was blowing a vase when we arrived. His artistic talent is just incredible. Each LC class member got to blow their own ornament. Orbix is one of many tourist destinations in Cherokee County. It is located on the Little River Canyon Rim Road (County Road 275), off AL Hwy 273.



November meeting: Focused on History & Infrastructure.



The day started off at Weiss Powerhouse & Dam. Plant Manager, Ted Pyron, spoke with the group for a few minutes about Alabama Power and how Weiss Lake is a major part of our everyday lives in Cherokee County. Weiss Dam was completed in June of 1961. It is the beginning of the Coosa River Chain of Power Plants in East Alabama. Two employees, Jimmy Lories and Lee Hill gave our group a tour of Weiss Power Plant explaining the operation of the Weiss Dam.

Next we traveled to Cherokee Electric Coop where Sarah Bright toured us and spoke with our group about Cherokee Electric and TVA. We also visited with Randal Wilkie, General Manager, and other employees of the Coop. Sarah is over Theft of Power and the group found it very interesting to hear stories of theft of power happening in our area.

We visited the Cherokee County Highway Department and met with Corey Chamber, County Engineer, who shared with us about the roads and bridges in Cherokee County. He spoke about the process of inspecting, getting bids, and repairing or upgrading roads in Cherokee County. Corey also talked about the FEMA regulations required of Cherokee County in the flood plains of our water ways, streams, creeks, rivers and lake.

Our group had a great lunch at Bar-b-Que Place & More located on the corner of Alexis and Armory Roads.

We next met with Sid Garrett, County Water Authority manager at his office on Main Street. Sid showed us maps of Cherokee County and where the springs are that supply water on the County Water System. Sid also showed us how the water meters are read by computers now. They were able to upgrade the system a couple of years ago and have been very profitable and time saving method for recording the use of water by its customers.

We walked next door to the Cherokee County Historical Museum where Carolyn Landrem, President of Weiss Lake Improvement Association met us and presented a power point about WLIA and the projects they work on during the year. She also talked about the importance of keeping our water clean and educating the public about water quality and concerns.

Dave Crum, Museum Director, allowed the group to tour the Museum and enjoyed all the displays on hand. The Historical Museum is a great place to enjoy learning about Cherokee County's history. It contains thousands of artifacts.

December meeting:

Focused on Economics and Education. It began at the Gadsden State Cherokee with Campus Director, Luanne Hayes, speaking to our group about the Cherokee County Industrial Development Authority and its role for Cherokee County. She spoke about how business and industry growth and retention is

important to our county. Mrs Hayes also spoke about Gadsden State Community College and the Cherokee Campus being a vital part of our County and the education opportunities it brings.

The class toured American Apparel, our longest running manufacturer in the County. Sharon Gifford and Joan Kelley toured our group through the plant. American Apparel makes Military Dress Coats and Uniforms for the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines. This plant has a state of the art cutting room and is the sole cutter for all American Apparel plants in Alabama.

After lunch at Subway on the Chesnut Bypass, we toured the Cherokee County Career & Tech Center. Principal Brett Keesler showed us each program offered to students in the Cherokee County School System. They offer many programs: Precision Machine, Auto Body and Mechanics, Horticulture, Welding, Cosmetology, Business, Computer Programming, AutoCAD, Nursing, Robotics, JAG and more. The school continues to grow and is a vital part of our County for students to learn a trade to start in the work force or to get college credit to continue in a 2 and 4 year college to earn a degree.

We finished the day at KTH, Leesburg Products. It now employs over 500 workers. KTH choose Leesburg to be their home in 2000, and continues to grow with supplying Honda at Lincoln auto frames for 4 vehicles. Gene Cleveland gave us a grand tour of the facility. It is an amazing place and we are blessed to have such a great company in our County.

Our Leadership Class will meet again in February and continue till April, focusing on Government, Health Care, and more. We will also be learning and participating in leadership skills and activities. To learn how you can participate in Leadership Cherokee, contact the Chamber office at 256-927-8455.

