

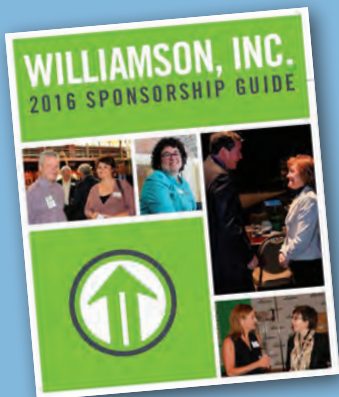
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from your  
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**Expose students  
to careers during  
Job Shadow Day**



**2016 SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE!**  
Boost your presence among  
Williamson County businesses

## VHAN debuts Chamber wellness program

The new year presents the ideal time to start those fitness goals you've always wanted to accomplish. The holiday fixings and delicious desserts you indulged in may have added a few pounds to your waistline. The Chamber's new member discount program can assist you in becoming a healthier you in 2016.

Vanderbilt Health Affiliated Network (VHAN) recently inked a deal with Williamson, Inc. to become the newest Affinity Partner. This partnership means some awesome wellness benefits are making their way to Chamber

members real soon.

How soon? Wednesday, Jan. 20, to be exact.

VHAN will introduce their wellness program to Chamber members and guests during this month's Membership Meeting, presented by Vanderbilt Health.

Member companies, regardless of size, will have an opportunity to provide their employees with a company-sponsored health and wellness program. Through an online portal, employees of the participating company can earn reward points for engaging in certain healthy goals and ini-



tiatives, such as exercising, weight loss, smoking cessation and reducing blood pressure. Employees can then apply those points toward the purchase of discounted products, up to 40 percent off items such as wearable technology, blenders and fitness gear. Eligibility requirements apply and there is a nominal fee for companies to partici-

pate. Learn more about this exciting offer at the luncheon, which takes place on the third Wednesday in January instead of the usual third Tuesday time slot.

Registration and networking begins at 11 a.m. The lunch and program starts at 11:30 a.m. at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs, 700 Cool Springs Boulevard East. The cost to attend is \$35 for Chamber members and \$55 for guests. Register online at [www.willamsonchamber.com](http://www.willamsonchamber.com) by Monday, Jan. 18 to receive a pre-meeting list of attendees.

## EC program launches in Williamson to test startup ideas

BY CHARLANE OLIVER

Before Dart Music became a rising star in Nashville's music tech industry, it started as an idea formed by founder and CEO Chris McMurtry. Dart Music seeks to solve the digital distribution problem for classical music by allowing classical music composers and niche classical record labels to upload their music to digital streaming services. McMurtry turned to the Nashville Entrepreneur Center (EC) to birth his idea into reality through their PreFlight program. PreFlight is the EC's premiere pre-accelerator educational program for entrepreneurs with idea stage startups looking to create a foundation for

launching their businesses. McMurtry has since graduated from the first class of Project Music, the Entrepreneur Center's music industry incubator.



The EC is hoping to find their next big idea in Williamson County through a partnership with Williamson, Inc. to bring PreFlight to aspiring entrepreneurs who live and work in the county.

"We're excited about being able to access groups of entrepreneurs and business people that might not otherwise

have been able to make it to the EC," said John Murdock, the EC's vice president of entrepreneurial development and facilitator of the PreFlight classes.

"We had a lot of entrepreneurs approaching us after we opened that said they weren't ready for an accelerator," said Murdock. "Perhaps they weren't committed to the idea full-time yet, maybe they weren't sure the business was going to be in the type of model that would fit the accelerator program, or maybe they didn't know how to talk about it in a way that would convince investors."

Murdock, who joined the EC team in July 2011, says it is also for people who

● CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## 2016 OUTLOOK WILLIAMSON

MARCH 15 | 7:30 - 11:00 AM | THE FACTORY  
Register at [willamsonchamber.com](http://willamsonchamber.com)

PRESENTED BY:

**SKANSKA**

# WELCOME new members

*These companies and individuals have made a commitment to business growth and to their community by joining the Williamson Chamber. They will enjoy the benefits of a robust business directory listing on the Chamber website and referrals from our office and from fellow members. When you need products or services, please search the directory on the Chamber website and do business with a Chamber member.*

**JOIN THE MEMBER BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT THE WILLIAMSON CHAMBER – CALL US TODAY AT 615-771-1912.**

## **BMC Metalworks, LLC**

1116 New Highway 7  
Columbia, TN 38401  
(931) 388-2978  
bmcmetalworksllc.com  
Jimmy Phillips

## **California Closets of Tennessee**

420 Cool Springs Blvd.  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(615) 367-1030  
californiaclosets.com  
Kurt Schusterman

## **ComForCare Nashville South**

417 Welshwood Dr., Suite 201  
Nashville, TN 37211  
(615) 983-6295  
comforcare.com/tennessee/  
nashville-south  
Howard Edwards

## **Connors Steak & Seafood**

1916 Galleria Blvd.  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(615) 771-5333  
connorsrestaurant.com  
Matthew Williams

## **Corner Asian Bistro**

210 Franklin Rd.  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
(615) 810-9152  
cornerasianbistro.com  
James Ren

## **CTS, Inc.**

5000 Meridian Blvd.  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(615) 224-0441  
askcts.com/index  
Chris Kinney

## **Debbie Deaver**

1800 Grey Pointe Dr.  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
(407) 421-4067  
Debbie Deaver

## **Earl Swensson Associates, Inc.**

1033 Demonbreun St., Suite 800  
Nashville, TN 37203  
(615) 329-9445  
esarch.com  
David Minnigan

## **HEALTHSOUTH Rehabilitation Hospital of Franklin**

1000 Physicians Way  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(615) 721-4000  
healthsouthfranklin.com  
Scott Peterson

## **John A Lopez/AIG Financial Network**

2000 American General Way  
Brentwood, TN 37064  
(479) 857-7638  
John Lopez

## **Liza Hippler Photography**

137 Allenhurst Cir.  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(615) 479-0998  
lizahipplerphotography.com  
Liza Hippler

## **McKinney Hearing Solutions, LLC dba Miracle Ear**

1000 Meridian Blvd., Suite 112  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(615) 778-0841  
miracle-ear-franklinton.com  
Micheleigh Perez

## **Patterson Real Estate Advisory Group, LLC**

1291 Bridgeton Park Dr.  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
(317) 439-3542  
pattersonreag.com  
Terry Hughes

## **RB Consulting, Inc.**

309 Inwood Way  
Franklin, TN 37064  
(615) 974-0442  
rb-sns.com  
Rob Broadhead

## **Salon Atash**

7021 Executive Center Dr.  
Suite 105  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
(615) 982-8799  
salonatash.com  
Katie Mirian

## **Sam Whitson**

803 Fair St.  
Franklin, TN 37064  
(615) 852-1076  
Sam Whitson

## **Sky Zone Trampoline Park**

1113 Murfreesboro Rd.  
Suite 254  
Franklin, TN 37064  
(615) 721-3626  
skyzone.com/franklin  
Chris Avery

## **Snaproll Media**

P.O. Box 682412  
Franklin, TN 37068  
(615) 997-0819  
snaprollmedia.com  
Steve Brugman

## **Summit Funding Inc.**

278 Franklin Rd., Suite 245  
Brentwood, TN 37027  
(615) 921-2000  
summitfunding.net/jprichard  
Jared Prichard

## **TransFirst**

6840 Carothers Pkwy., Suite 205  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(800) 613-0148  
transfirst.com  
Ben Juillerat

## **UF & S Consultants**

2008 Daylily Dr.  
Franklin, TN 37067  
(703) 625-3151  
ufsconsultants.com  
Umar Farooq

## 18 CHAMBER BENEFITS for you and your business

- 24/7 online presence in our Business Directory
- Access to prominent leaders, elected officials and over 1,300 members
- Advertising, sponsorships, Hot Deals, and targeted direct mail marketing
- Business referrals exclusively to members
- Exclusive discounts on products and services
- Professional development and educational programming
- Promotion through *Livability* magazine, The Williamson Weekly, The Point and social media
- Volunteer opportunities to impact your community
- Business advocacy
- Business profile analytics
- Credibility and reputation
- Free job postings
- Insider information to industry news, resources, data and trends
- Meeting room rentals
- Networking opportunities
- Ribbon cutting ceremonies
- Tax deductible membership dues
- Visibility and exposure

Join WILLIAMSON, INC. to take advantage of these valuable membership benefits!  
Call 615-771-1912, stop by our office, or sign up online at [williamsonchamber.com](http://williamsonchamber.com).

# join us!

**PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OPEN HOUSE  
MONDAY, JAN. 25 • 4-6 PM**

Learn about the benefits of Chamber membership at our Prospective Member Open House at the Chamber office, 5005 Meridian Blvd., Suite 150, Franklin.



RSVP to [Claudia@williamsonchamber.com](mailto:Claudia@williamsonchamber.com).  
For questions, call 615-771-1912.



THE POINT is published monthly as a partnership between the Williamson Chamber and *The Tennessean*. For editorial inquiries or advertising opportunities, contact Charlane Oliver at [charlane@williamsonchamber.com](mailto:charlane@williamsonchamber.com).

5005 Meridian Blvd., Suite 150 | Franklin, TN 37067 | 615.771.1912 | [www.williamsonchamber.com](http://www.williamsonchamber.com)



# PreFlight launches for aspiring entrepreneurs (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

may have an established startup that's generating revenue but may want a system and support network to help get through early phases and get traction in the marketplace. However, Murdock says a business license or other legal status is

not needed in order to take the class. In fact, Murdock encourages participants to take the class before filing any legal documents to explore whether the company's business model is the right fit in terms of time, money and feasibility.

"It's a really cheap way, relative to investing a lot of your time and money pursuing an idea, to understand if it's worth the time," Murdock said.

The EC, a nonprofit focused on connecting entrepreneurs with the critical

resources they need to successfully create, launch and grow their businesses, launched PreFlight two years ago out of a growing need for assistance from entrepreneurs wanting to test their ideas without the associated commitment or risk. Now, the EC is branching out in new ways to expand the program to other Tennessee counties and nonprofits across the country.

"We've used the program outside of Nashville already in different models," Murdock said. "What we are doing with Williamson, Inc. will be our most intensive format of providing the program where we go out and teach the program onsite to participants, rather than have them streaming the class virtually."

PreFlight will take 30 participants on a 14-week journey consisting of 90-minute interactive classes on Wednesday nights from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Classes begin Feb. 3 and conclude April 27 at the Chamber office, 5005 Meridian Blvd., Suite 150 in Franklin. The registration fee of \$1,250 includes two seats per startup. Registration will remain open until all slots are filled.

Murdock uses real examples and issues to explore key concepts covered in the class. Participants receive a variety of benefits, including: the opportunity to apply skills in ideation, customer development, product-market fit, pricing and pitch-building; unlimited access to the EC's mentor pool of more than 200 business leaders, startup operators, resources providers and industry specialists (based on availability); an invitation to attend EC community events like Sip It!, Entrepreneur's Happy Hour and special speakers; drop-in first-come, first-serve workspace at the EC during business hours; and an opportunity to pitch to a panel of startup and investment experts for feedback at the program's end.

Participants will also have access to more than six hours of in-depth presentations through an online platform.

Murdock has worked with more than 1,000 entrepreneurs, and graduates have raised \$70 million from investors. Similar to McMurtry's Dart Music, PreFlight graduates may go on to other accelerator programs or may choose to fly solo and launch their business with the tools gained in class.

Visit [williamsonchamber.com](http://williamsonchamber.com) to register or contact Nick Biniker, Williamson, Inc.'s Existing Business Manager, at [nick@williamsonchamber.com](mailto:nick@williamsonchamber.com). To learn more about PreFlight and the Nashville Entrepreneur Center, go to [www.ec.co/preflight](http://www.ec.co/preflight).

## WILLIAMSON, INC. ECONOMIC DASHBOARD - DEC. 2015

[www.williamsonchamber.com](http://www.williamsonchamber.com) | Williamson County, Tennessee | 615.261.2880

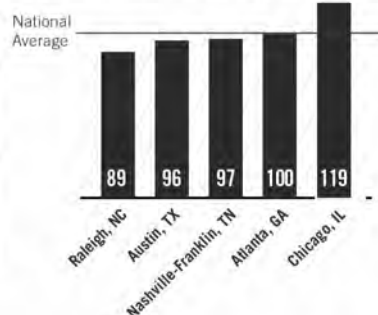
### POPULATION: 201,486

12% county 5-year growth

4% state 5-year growth

Nashville MSA: 1,778,483

### COST OF LIVING: Q3



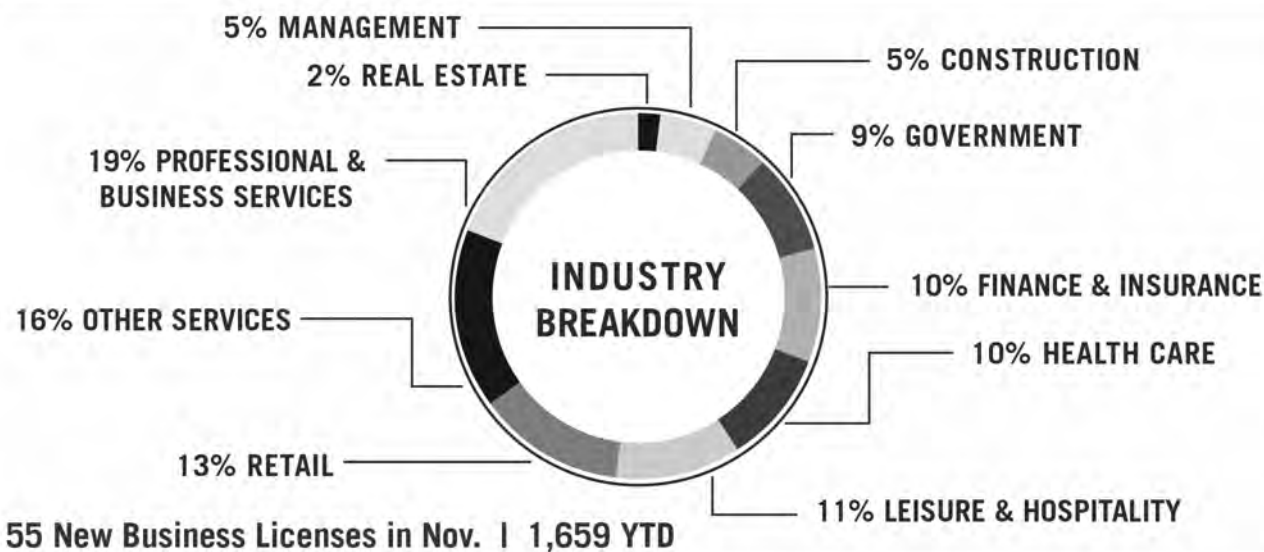
### OCT. UNEMPLOYMENT: 3.9%

5.4% TN | 4.8% U.S.

105,830 Labor Force

120,920 Total Jobs

\$66,046 Avg. Earnings



### OCTOBER LOCAL SALES TAX INCOME:

Up 6% from 2014  
Up 18% from 2013

### RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Median SF Home sale price for OCT. was **\$412,000**, up **6.3%** from 2014. The # of SF home closings decreased by 10.5% from 2014.

**175** home building permits issued in OCT, **2039** YTD, up 20% from 2014.

### COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Q3 2015)

	VACANCY RATE	CLASS A AVERAGE	VACANT SF
Brentwood	<b>2.6%</b>	\$27.22	127,325
Cool Springs	<b>1.1%</b>	\$30.53	72,209





Nearly 50 young professionals gathered for food, networking, fun and games at the annual holiday mixer.



From left, Vickie Manning, Paula Cirulli, Susan Minor, Patty Harman and Lenda Elmlinger networked during the festivities.



Megan Menke, Roma Powis and Shelia Cleveland networked over appetizers courtesy of The Harvest at Homstead Manor restaurant.



### YOUNG PROFESSIONALS CONNECT

Wednesday, Jan. 20  
5 p.m. • Drake's

**JOIN US NEXT TIME!**



Vanessa Pogarch, far right, chats with a fellow guest at the Young Professionals Holiday Mixer, Dec. 3 at TechnologyAdvice.



### WOMEN IN BUSINESS LUNCHEON

Tuesday, Jan. 26  
11:30 a.m.  
Brentwood United Methodist Church

**JOIN US NEXT TIME!**



**WILLIAMSON MEDICAL CENTER**  
*named* **TOP 10%**  
*in the* **NATION!**

**FOR OVERALL  
HOSPITAL ★ MEDICAL ★ SURGICAL  
CARE**

**PATIENT SAFETY**  
Top 10% Hospital in Nation  
OVERALL HOSPITAL CARE  
2016 CARECHEX.COM

**PATIENT SAFETY**  
Top 10% Hospital in Nation  
OVERALL MEDICAL CARE  
2016 CARECHEX.COM

**PATIENT SAFETY**  
Top 10% Hospital in Nation  
OVERALL SURGICAL CARE  
2016 CARECHEX.COM



4321 CAROTHERS PARKWAY • FRANKLIN  
[williamsonmedicalcenter.org](http://williamsonmedicalcenter.org)



## Williamson, Inc. groups conclude successful year with holiday mixers

Williamson, Inc. was making spirits bright last month with a couple of festive holiday mixers. Nearly 50 young professionals attended their Dec. 3 holiday shindig at TechnologyAdvice in Nashville. Guests 40-and-under showed up to participate in ice breaker games and enjoyed food catered by Ground Restaurant, a new Franklin establishment serving customized burgers and baked potatoes. Saint Thomas Health was the presenting sponsor.

Women in Business welcomed a host of women professionals looking to savor, sip and shop at their Dec. 8 party at Homstead Manor in Thompson's Station. The event was sponsored by Vanderbilt Health and featured a marketplace of vendors selling products to those looking to snag holiday gifts for

their loved ones or for themselves.

Ladies could receive mini-makeovers at the Spitfire Salon booth, purchase fine jewelry and clothing from Fab'rik, or create an inspiring note to the children at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt's table. Other marketplace vendors included Bella Baskets, Homstead Manor and Nesting Project.

Southern Events Party Rental provided a down-home, cozy atmosphere with decor that made guests feel right at home. H. Clark Distillery created a signature cocktail that was a big hit among guests. Ride Simply was the rideshare sponsor and provided discounted rides to the event. And Homstead Manor served delicious Southern-inspired bites as well as coffee beverages from Muletown Coffee.



Bella Baskets was on hand to display their custom gift baskets for the holiday season at the Dec. 8 Women in Business holiday mixer.



Women in Business committee member Kristi Knierim gets a Spitfire Salon mini-makeover.



Southern Events Party Rental provided this cozy setting alongside a wood-burning fireplace at Homstead Manor's event barn.



Nesting Project was among the six marketplace vendors selling their custom shirts and invitations at the Women in Business holiday mixer.





# what's new IN WILLIAMSON

WE CELEBRATE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AS THEY OPEN, EXPAND AND RENOVATE!



## APCOM

125 Southeast Parkway • Franklin

**Ground Breaking – Dec. 11 • 317 employees**

APCOM, a leading global manufacturer of reliable water heating and appliance components, broke ground on a new 57,750 square foot addition to its existing Franklin facility, which is set for completion in late 2016. APCOM manufactures 75 million parts in the United States, Mexico, China and India.



## CHEDDAR'S CASUAL CAFE

1654 Westgate Circle • Brentwood

**Ribbon Cutting – Dec. 7**

Cheddar's Casual Cafe opened its casual dining restaurant in Brentwood. It is owned and operated by Greer Companies, a family-owned hospitality and commercial real estate development company headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky. The company operates 44 Cheddar's restaurants in eight states and employs over 7,000 people.



## CORNER ASIAN BISTRO

210 Franklin Rd. • Brentwood

**Ribbon Cutting – Dec. 17 • 8 employees**

Corner Asian Bistro has opened their second location in Brentwood. The restaurant serves up Asian cuisine, combining American-Chinese cuisine with traditional, authentic Chinese cuisine. Visit Corner Asian Bistro online at [www.conerasiancafe.net](http://www.conerasiancafe.net).



## METROPOLITAN BANK

6100 Tower Circle • Franklin

**Ribbon Cutting – Dec. 9**

Operating in Williamson County since 2012, Metropolitan Bank recently moved its office from Brentwood to Franklin. The new office takes up 5,000 square feet of the ground floor of the One Franklin Park office tower. Metropolitan Bank is redefining banking with client-focused, service-oriented products.



## MILES EXPRESS

404 Mallory Station Rd. • Franklin

**Ribbon Cutting – Dec. 15 • 7 employees**

MILES Express opened its second location in Franklin, offering the latest carwash technology available and ensuring a clean, shiny, dry car in five minutes. They also offer waxes in 20 minutes. Their first location, MILES The Auto Spa, is the most upscale carwash in the industry.



## SALON ATASH

7021 Executive Center Dr., Ste. 105 • Brentwood

**Ribbon Cutting – Dec. 16 • 4 employees**

Salon Atash is the first full-service, total-image salon/boutique in the Nashville area. They offer a hair salon, brow bar, makeup services, personal styling and clothing boutique. Salon Atash opened in 1980 with its first location on West End Avenue in Nashville.

## GETTING NOTICED IS THE POINT!

Advertise your business  
to nearly 40,000  
Middle Tennessee households.

**Contact Charlane Oliver at**  
[charlane@williamsonchamber.com](mailto:charlane@williamsonchamber.com)  
to inquire about rates.



## TRIANGLE TIRE NORTH AMERICA, LLC

5106 Maryland Way • Brentwood

**Grand Opening – Nov. 2 • 8 employees**

The grand opening marks the establishment of the North American headquarters for the Triangle Tire Group, whose global headquarters are in Weihai, China. Triangle Tire is currently the 14th largest tire company in the world distributing tires to over 16 countries across the globe.

## THE CHAMBER WILL HOST YOUR RIBBON CUTTING!

Planning to open, expand, renovate  
or break ground on a business in 2016?

Let Williamson, Inc. host your  
ribbon cutting ceremony!

**Call Claudia Herrera at 615-771-1912**  
to arrange your celebratory event.

## events&meetings

The CHAMBER OFFICE is located in Cool Springs at 5005 Meridian Blvd., Suite 150, Franklin.

### JAN 20 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

11:30 a.m., Franklin Marriott Cool Springs  
700 Cool Springs Blvd. East, Franklin  
Presented by Vanderbilt Health

### JAN 20 YOUNG PROFESSIONALS CONNECT

5-7 p.m., Location TBA

### JAN 21 NOLENSVILLE AREA BUSINESS COUNCIL LUNCHEON

11:30 a.m.  
Providence Baptist Fellowship Church  
1668 Sunset Rd., Brentwood  
Presented by Williamson Medical Center  
Panel: Town of Nolensville officials

### JAN 25 PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OPEN HOUSE

4-6 p.m., Chamber office

### JAN 26 WOMEN IN BUSINESS LUNCHEON

11:30 a.m.  
Brentwood United Methodist Church  
309 Franklin Road, Brentwood  
Presented by Williamson Medical Center  
Speaker: Dr. Heather Rupe

### JAN 29 PUBLIC AFFAIRS ROUNDTABLE

7:15-8:30 a.m.  
Williamson County Administrative Complex  
1320 West Main Street, Franklin  
Panel: Reps. Casada, Durham, Sargent and Sen. Johnson

### FEB 3 MEMBER CONNECT! LEADS EXCHANGE

7:30 a.m. & 3:30 p.m., Chamber office

### FEB 3 PREFLIGHT

5-7:30 p.m., Chamber office

### FEB 5 FIRST FRIDAY

7:30 a.m., EISPACES  
1550 W. McEwen Dr. #300, Franklin  
Presented by FirstBank  
Speaker: Heath Clark, H. Clark Distillery

### FEB 9 CHAMBER 101 MEMBER ORIENTATION

3:30 p.m., Chamber Office

**Save the date • March 15**  
**OUTLOOK WILLIAMSON**  
**7:30-11 a.m. • The Factory**

### RIBBON CUTTINGS

JAN 15, 3 p.m. • Graphitti Signs & Graphics Studio  
JAN 22, 11 a.m. • Herban Market  
JAN 28, 3 p.m. • California Closets of TN  
FEB 4, 4:30 p.m. • Conner's Steak & Seafood Restaurant

**PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE  
FOR UPDATES AND MORE INFORMATION.**

## Nolensville officials to update community

Want to know what's happening in Nolensville? Attend the Nolensville Area Business Council (NABC) quarterly meeting scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 21, 11:30 a.m. at Providence Baptist Fellowship Church, 1668 Sunset Road in Brentwood.

At the NABC's first meeting of the year, a panel of guests from the Town of Nolensville will give an annual update on the town's economic viability and sustainability. The panel will include: Nolensville Mayor Jimmy Alexander, Town Administrator Kenneth McLawhon and Chairman of the Nolensville Economic and Community Development Committee Tyler Thayer. Topics for discussion will include projected area developments, business growth, traffic and area rezoning. Williamson, Inc. President and CEO Matt Lagen

will moderate the panel discussion.

Alexander has been a Nolensville resident since 1999 and is currently serving his second term as mayor. Mayor Alexander plays an

ily-friendly town of Nolensville has a population of 8,500 — a 45 percent increase since the 2010 Census — and is expected to double to 15,000 by 2025. Rapid

growth is on the rise as evidenced by the three new schools opening in 2016 to accommodate an additional 3,400 students in the area. Nolensville is also home to Blue Bell Creameries, Martin's Bar-B-Que Joint and United Communications, which is

the event's meeting sponsor.

The meeting is presented by Williamson Medical Center. Catering is provided by Amico's New York Pizza & Italian Restaurant. Tickets are \$15 for Chamber members, \$20 for guests and can be purchased at [williamsonchamber.com](http://williamsonchamber.com). For more information, please contact Verlinda Darden, Meetings & Events Coordinator, at [verlinda@williamsonchamber.com](mailto:verlinda@williamsonchamber.com).



Jimmy Alexander



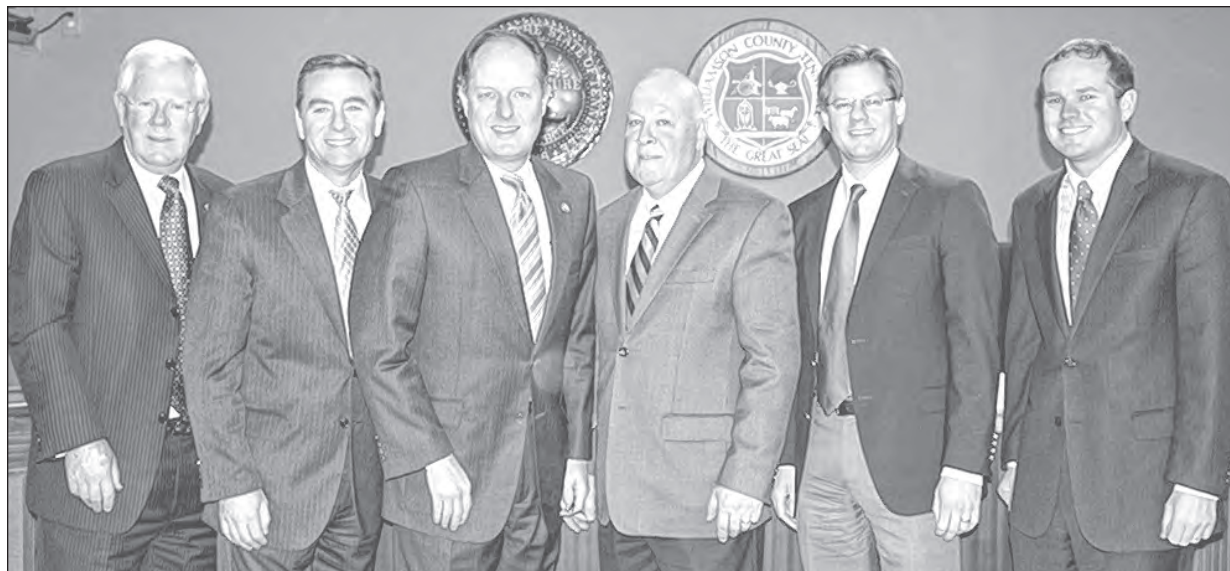
Kenneth McLawhon



Tyler Thayer

active role on the Nolensville Planning Commission and Economic Development Committee. He retired from Metropolitan Government of Nashville after 42 years of service. McLawhon took office in Jan. 2015 after serving 13 years as the town manager of Warrenton, Virginia. He is responsible for overseeing Nolensville's daily operations.

Recently voted as one of the best Nashville suburbs to live in, the fam-



Public Affairs Roundtable, held monthly on the last Friday, features the latest happenings from the Tennessee General Assembly. Pictured from left are Rep. Charles Sargent, Rep. Glen Casada, Sen. Jack Johnson, Business Advocacy Committee member and moderator David Crouch, Williamson, Inc. President and CEO Matt Lagen, and Rep. Jeremy Durham.

## Public invited to hear updates from legislators

As part of Williamson, Inc.'s commitment to being a force in the region and an influential business advocate, the Chamber hosts a year-long Public Affairs Roundtable program that features prominent local and state government officials discussing critical topics that affect our growing communities and neighborhoods.

The 2016 lineup kicks off Friday, Jan. 29 with a legislative update

from Williamson County's state delegation. Guests will include Tennessee Representatives Glen Casada, Jeremy Durham, Charles Sargent and Senator Jack Johnson. The hour-long program begins at 7:30 a.m. at the Williamson County Administrative Complex, 1320 West Main Street in Franklin. The forum is open to members as well as the general public, and there is no cost to attend. The event is presented by

the Vanderbilt University Office of Community, Neighborhood, and Government Relations.

Public Affairs Roundtable is televised on Comcast Channel 3, the county's public information channel and rebroadcast on Williamson County Television's YouTube Channel. Register at [williamsonchamber.com](http://williamsonchamber.com), or contact Verlinda Darden at [verlinda@williamsonchamber.com](mailto:verlinda@williamsonchamber.com) for more information.



# FSSD awarded top honors at state school board convention

The Franklin Special School District (FSSD) Board of Education, collectively and individually, received the highest awards given at the Tennessee School Boards Association's (TSBA) annual state conference on Nov. 16. During an awards luncheon in Nashville, the TSBA announced the FSSD Board of Education as the 2015 Tennessee School Board of the Year. Tim Stillings, FSSD's board chairman, received the most prestigious honor awarded to a school board member by the TSBA, the School Board Member of the Year and Hal C. Henard Distinguished Service Award. Allena Bell, serving her first elected term, was selected as a Master Ambassador for her outreach efforts to increase community awareness and understanding of public education issues.

Stillings, who was first elected in 1998, is serving his fifth term on the board as chairman. He is approaching 20 years of board service, with previous appointments as board treasurer, secretary and vice chairman. Bell was appointed in 2013 to fill a vacant seat and was subsequently elected in 2014 to serve a four-year term.

FSSD is a K-8 school system with approximately 3,850 students enrolled and eight schools. On the 2015 State Report Card, FSSD received all A's in achievement in the three testing categories — reading/language arts, math and science — and maintained a high level of academic growth based on the TCAP scores administered last spring to third through eighth-grade students.

FSSD is one of 14 special school districts in Tennessee, which is enabled by legislative action and operates independently from county districts. FSSD's six-member body serves four-year staggered terms with an election of new members every two years. The other four members are: Alicia Spencer Barker, Robert Blair, Robin

Newman and Kevin Townsel.

"The Point" sat down with Bell and Stillings to discuss their accolades and what exactly makes FSSD "special."

● ***Congratulations on being awarded School Board of the Year. Tell us about how this came about?***

STILLINGS: Allena has done a remarkable job of making sure we met all the qualifying requirements and documented our milestones. To be considered for the award, school boards must be a TSBA Board of Distinction. The FSSD Board is currently in its second of two years as a TSBA Board of Distinction. The last time the FSSD won School Board of the Year was in 1998.

BELL: We were already doing the right things. It was just a matter of documenting our excellence.

● ***What accomplishments of the Board are you most proud of?***

BELL: Our board has unquestioned integrity. It's a pleasure to share with students and teachers how much of an honor it is to serve them and how all of our decisions center around what's best for them.

STILLINGS: For me, it would be fiscal stewardship. We invest more per student than any other district in the state, and our results show that this is a good investment.

● ***What makes you a well-functioning board?***

STILLINGS: This is a non-partisan board that is laser-focused on excellence in teaching and learning for all.

We are not compensated and serve at-large. I'm okay with this because it allows us to eliminate some superfluous things. We do our business and we turn over what is not our business to staff and administration. We don't serve at the special interest of one neighborhood or district. Every school reflects the community as a whole.

● ***What puts the "special" in Franklin Special School District, and what distinguishes you from Williamson County Schools?***

BELL: We have a lot of things in common with WCS as far as being a high-achieving school district and having a big focus on school readiness. We have a laser-like focus to make sure a wide range of learners are able to grow in their educational experiences. We offer music, art, physical education/recess and computer science programs in our elementary schools five days a week. We believe this is extremely important in the full development of the child. Another distinction is that FSSD received the First Lady

Michelle Obama's HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms Award at the Gold level.

STILLINGS: Our population of students is different from WCS. Our free and reduced lunch rate is about 40 percent, whereas at the county-wide level the rate is very low. This means we have to provide, without as many resources, programs that will help our special populations achieve at the

same or better level than what we're measured against in the county. We approach teaching and learning from a holistic perspective.

● ***Are there any programs or initiatives that involve the Williamson County business community?***

BELL: We are proud members of the Williamson Chamber and our Director of Schools, Dr. David Snowden, gives a joint Chamber address with Williamson County Schools Director, Dr. Mike Looney. Secondly, the Raise Your Hand Williamson initiative in partnership with the United Way of Williamson County lets employees volunteer as after-noon tutors, mentors and readers in the classroom. We partner with the health department

for the Walk Across Williamson challenge, a walking contest between WCS and FSSD families that awards \$3,000 toward the winning school's physical education department.

Leadership Franklin plays a huge role in engaging our students about leadership skills. The annual Career Exploration Day, hosted with WCS in November, helps broaden students' perspectives about future careers. The Williamson County Education Foundation allows businesses to earmark donations toward specific schools. And First Tennessee Bank and Cornerstone Financial Credit Union provides monetary gifts to the district's top teaching award recipients.

● ***In what ways can the business community get involved in FSSD?***

STILLINGS: We're always looking for more ways to partner with businesses. As the community grows with large corporations relocating to the county, we would be interested in high-level partnerships on special programs. For instance, specialized language academies or a STEM lab co-sponsored by a corporation would be great to have in our schools. We want businesses, large and small, to feel invested because their employees have children in our schools.

Learn more about how to become involved in Franklin Special School District at [www.fssd.org](http://www.fssd.org).



## TIM STILLINGS

Franklin Special School District Board Chairman

## ALLENA BELL

Franklin Special School District Board Member



FSSD Board Chairman Tim Stillings received the C. Hal Henard Distinguished Service Award and the 2015 School Board Member of the Year Award at the TSBA annual convention, Nov. 16 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville.



FSSD Board Member Allena Bell was recognized as a Master Ambassador at the TSBA annual convention, Nov. 16 at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville.



Franklin Special School District was awarded the 2015 School Board of the Year Award by the Tennessee School Board Association. Board members are, front row from left, Alicia Spencer, Allena Bell, Robin Newman, and back row from left, FSSD Board Chairman Tim Stillings, Kevin Townsel, FSSD Director of Schools Dr. David Snowden and Robert Blair.



# Student Pitch Day competition showcases innovative startup ideas

BY MORGAN DENT

Entrepreneurship and economics permeated Centennial High School in a creative way on Wednesday, Dec. 2 for Entrepreneur Day. Approximately 90 honors students from Don Kirby's 12th grade economics class gathered in the school library, joined by a team of judges consisting of local business owners, parents and economic development staff, for a half-day pitch contest.

"These kids are honors economics students," said Kirby, a 30-year veteran teacher of Williamson County Schools. "They take one semester of economics, and this is one of those honors economics projects that they are required to do for credit. They've been working on these presentations all semester."

As part of their economics class, students were divided into groups of two or three and given an assignment to come up with a product, formulate a business plan, and develop a "pitch" for investors

and consumers to buy into their product. In a series of eight-minute pitching rounds, judges listened to each team present their reasons for investing in their mock company.

Topics covered in each student's presentation included market strategy, target audience, profit, price, sales margins and industry growth projections for their business. After four rounds of pitching, the top three teams — calculated from cumulative judges' scores — participated in a final presentation in front of all the judges and their fellow students.

Despite being a hypothetical simulation of what entrepreneurs actually encounter when launching a startup, the ideas and products were innovative and ingenious. The products ranged from the "Hop n' Rock," a jump rope that syncs with your Bluetooth music player for fun exercise, to the "Origami Company," a machine designed for restaurants that eliminates the manual labor aspect of

folding up silverware into napkins, with the machine doing all the folding. The winning group, who all won passes to SOAR Adventure Tower in Franklin, was "Dreams Do Come True Princess Parties." The business aimed to provide entertainment for children's parties in the form of popular animated characters.

The judges, representing businesses including Jet's Pizza, TransAmerica and Premise Health, shared their best advice for students, not only looking to become an entrepreneur but entering into the business world at large. Advice included honing presentation skills, gaining experience at a business, failing fast and knowing your product. Kerry Schrader, president and co-founder of the startup MixTroz, added that starting a business is hard and rewarding and "nothing worth having is easy."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Due to confidentiality policies for Williamson County Schools, names and pictures of students could not be included for this story.



Janet Rives, founder and president of In Plan Sight, LLC, served as a judge and shared advice for starting a business with Centennial High School honors students at their annual Pitch Day on Dec. 2.

## Job Shadow Day recruits local businesses to shed light on careers



During last year's Job Shadow Day, Summit High School graduate Josh Sadler worked as an engineering intern at Atmos Energy to enhance his studies in the Project Lead The Way Engineering Program.

Williamson businesses are invited to be a part of shaping the next generation of job seekers by participating in one of Williamson County Schools' (WCS) most unique learning experiences. Job Shadow Day, set for April 19, wants to recruit more than 100 companies to offer job shadow experiences in all vocational areas.

"The day is an effective, low-cost way for companies — large and small — to preview and promote their career and internship opportunities as well as influence a student's career-making decision," said WCS Career Counselor Rebecca Collins.

This work-based learning program, which is coordinated by the district's Career and Technical

Education department, gives students the opportunity to spend time on the job with an employer while getting a real-world, hands-on experience in their field of interest.

Employers can organize a job shadow experience that best fits their company. They will determine the agenda for the day, the number of students they can host, and the career opportunity highlighted. For example, the employer can decide to host one student or 20 students for two hours or a full eight hours.

WCS staff will market opportunities to students based on information employers provide in advance and will register students for specific company visits. Students will be responsible for their own trans-

portation to the job shadow site.

Job Shadow Day is one of several ways that Williamson, Inc. partners with Williamson County Schools as part of the Chamber's six-point strategic plan to building a prosperous, growing county. Education is a key driving force in our local economy; therefore, Williamson, Inc. fosters ways in which the business community can strengthen their relations with the public schools and next generation leaders.

Companies interested in Williamson County Schools Job Shadow Day should contact Rebecca Collins at (615) 472-4063 or rebeccac@wcs.edu by Feb. 1, 2016. Visit [williamsonchamber.com/education](http://williamsonchamber.com/education) to learn more.

## Distillery owner to speak on avoiding first-year startup pitfalls at First Friday

First Friday, the Chamber's free monthly educational forum for small business owners, will welcome Heath Clark as the guest speaker Feb. 5 at EISPACES, 1550 W. McEwen Dr., Suite 300 in Franklin.

Clark is the owner of H. Clark Distillery located in Thompson's Station. In August of 2014, H. Clark Distillery became the first

legal distillery in Williamson County in more than 100 years. Clark will present "The Pitfalls of First-Year Entrepreneurship" to members and guests.

By trade, Clark is an attorney and shareholder at Clark Business & Health Law, a firm he started that provides healthcare regulatory and transactional advice to hospi-

tals and healthcare providers.

Networking begins at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast catered by Delek Mapco, and the hour-long program, which is presented by FirstBank, gets underway at 8 a.m. Spaces fill quickly, so register early at [williamsonchamber.com](http://williamsonchamber.com). Follow live tweets with hashtag #FirstFriday on Twitter.



H. Clark Distillery owner Heath Clark will speak at the Feb. 5 First Friday event.