

BALDWIN INSIDER

➤ **Belong in Baldwin: A Strategic Tool for Employer Success in Baldwin County**

As Baldwin County experiences unprecedented growth as the 7th fastest-growing metropolitan area in the United States, the landscape of its workforce is undergoing a significant shift. With 17,000 individuals reaching retirement age and only 10,000 entering the working-age demographic in the next five years, while jobs in the region are growing by the thousands, the need for a targeted approach to talent acquisition has never been more critical.

In response to the upcoming workforce transformation, the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance (BCEDA) proudly introduces "Belong in Baldwin," a strategic initiative poised to bridge the talent gap and provide resources to employers in the region.

"Belong in Baldwin" goes beyond the numbers. It addresses not only the measurable challenges posed by demographic shifts but also the societal aspects of workforce transformation. As seasoned professionals exit the workforce, their expertise and institutional knowledge leave a void that highlights the need for strategic talent development and attraction. This initiative champions a seamless workforce transition by connecting employers

with a diverse pool of skilled individuals who bring fresh perspectives, innovation, and adaptability. By emphasizing the strategic alignment of talent with organizational objectives, BCEDA ensures that "Belong in Baldwin" becomes a dynamic force for employer success, contributing not just to immediate recruitment needs but also to the long-term sustainability and growth of businesses in Baldwin County.

With comprehensive support for both employers and incoming talent, this initiative acts as a catalyst for connecting Baldwin's employers to their future leaders. Through strategic marketing to attract talent when interests arise, Belong in Baldwin aims to be a next-level resource for Baldwin County.

Belong in Baldwin is the BCEDA's proactive approach to ensuring employers have access to a pool of skilled professionals, even in the face of demographic challenges. We are committed to helping businesses not only attract talent but retain and develop a workforce that aligns with their long-term objectives.

BCEDA invites employers and investors to embrace the transformative possibilities that "Belong in Baldwin" presents in the context of shifting workforce demographics. This initiative is your strategic partner in navigating the talent landscape, ensuring your organization is well-equipped to thrive in changing demographics. Join us as we bridge the talent gap, foster career growth, and establish Baldwin County as the destination where employers and the right talent truly belong. Explore the strategic advantage of "Belong in Baldwin" at BelongInBaldwin.com.





▶ Building Dreams, Building Baldwin: The Rise of 68 Ventures



Nathan Cox, Chairman,
68 Ventures

For 68 Ventures Chairman Nathan Cox, bringing talent to Baldwin County is what will make it thrive. His business venture was more than a plan—it was a passion simmering in the depths of his ambition.

After graduating from the University of Alabama, Cox took on the role of Rifle Platoon Commander with 3rd Bn 6th Marines. But the call of home in Baldwin County led him to kickstart Bellator Real Estate and Development, a venture that has now proudly grown into the largest real estate brokerage along the Gulf Coast.

In the throes of the 2008 Great Recession, Cox jumped at the opportunity to acquire distressed real estate, only to hit a roadblock—there was no one to sell it to. And so, in 2011, Truland Homes was born, marking a pivotal moment that propelled 68 Ventures to its status as a business powerhouse.

At its peak, 68 Ventures orchestrated 18 operating businesses, a team of 600 members, and provided employment for thousands across the Gulf Coast. Cox, reflecting on the present, unveiled the company's role in developing neighborhoods for D.R. Horton, with a special emphasis on the heart of it all—Baldwin County. With eight companies exclusively dedicated to the county's development, Nathan shared their expansive master plans, with the Stonebridge community as an example. Stonebridge, Cox said, is destined to become a vibrant town with over a thousand homes, eventually expanding to 4,000 to 5,000 home sites, accommodating a

population exceeding 10,000.

“It will have its own school system with Stonebridge Elementary, and we’ve already donated land for a future middle and high school, as well as Baldwin Prep being on that property,” Cox said. “We view it as almost an entire town that will be developed over the next 10 years. We are extremely excited about that.”

The driving force behind these grand projects? Nathan's commitment to breathing new life into Baldwin County and making it an irresistible homecoming for the younger crowd. Recognizing the need for the lively energy found in metropolitan areas, Nathan aims to infuse these developments with the dynamism that draws younger folks back to their roots.

“Right now, if you go out and see the world, or go to college, and you're wanting to go back home, there's not a really attractive place for a young person in their early mid-20's or even early 30's,” Cox said. “There's not that energy you find in some of the bigger metropolitan areas, where you have younger people congregating at coffee shops, exercise facilities or walking parks. With these new master plans, we hope to create that energy in Baldwin County.”

Yet, the journey to develop these sites is no cakewalk. Cox sheds light on the intricate dance with local government, expressing gratitude for the unwavering support from various cities in Baldwin County. His philosophy is simple—do the right things for the right reasons, operate within guidelines, and foster a genuine connection with the community.

“With the county in general, we have always had a ton of support across the board,” Cox said. “We love working with the economic development team, the county board of education and the county commissioners. I grew up here and I would argue that I love Baldwin County more than anybody you put me in the arena against.”

Reflecting on his deep roots in Baldwin County, Nathan emphasizes the importance of providing top-notch housing options in appealing locations. To him, failing to do so risks diluting the very essence

that makes the county special, potentially leading to a loss of its residents.

For those dreaming of starting a venture in Baldwin County, Cox offers some personal advice - brace for a journey longer and tougher than you expect. It's not for the faint of heart, but, as Cox puts it, there's nothing more rewarding than betting on yourself and taking the entrepreneurial plunge.

To read more about 68 Ventures, visit their website www.68ventures.com.

Cultivating Success in Baldwin: AgriTech's Innovative Soil Solutions



Christina Woerner
McInnis, CEO, AgriTech
Corp

Small Business doesn't mean small talent. Meet Christina Woerner McInnis, a visionary fifth-generation farmer and the mind behind AgriTech Corp. located in Baldwin County. Her journey began in 2017 when her father tasked her with auditing their family garden center in Pensacola, FL. What started as a routine examination turned

into a revelation—countless individuals approached McInnis with the same complaint: “Something is wrong with my lawn.”

In response, McInnis consistently inquired about soil tests, realizing the process people had to endure to address their lawn issues. She empathized with the need for precise solutions, drawing a parallel between caring for her four children's health and nurturing the health of the soil.

“I wanted to provide a prescriptive approach based on science,” McInnis emphasized. “I knew that I wanted to create a simple soil test for the consumer, because a regular user doesn't know what two pounds of nitrogen in the growing season means.”

As the project evolved, McInnis transformed her endeavor into what she proudly calls a software experience—SoilKit 365. This platform aims to empower users every day of the year, offering a comprehensive solution to soil-related challenges.

Looking ahead to 2024, McInnis shared her plans to introduce new features, including a Telehealth session. This feature allows users to schedule consultations with experts nationwide, bridging the gap between localized issues and expert solutions. Navigating the agriculture-technology sector,

McInnis highlighted the neglect of homeowners and hobby farmers by technology. She emphasized the importance of a gradual integration of technology, ensuring users can absorb and adapt to the changes seamlessly.

“When you overlay technology, you have to do it one step at a time,” McInnis said. “You have to really sit back and see how the user is absorbing it. It's crazy because people are now banking online, and we were still relying on old methods.”

At AgriTech, sustainability isn't just a buzzword—it's a commitment. McInnis stressed the pivotal role of soil health in achieving overall sustainability. By addressing soil issues with SoilKit, the company aims to heal not just the soil but also the crops, preventing the release of harmful carbon associated with the unnecessary ripping up of neglected lawns.

“It's so important, sustainability wise, that we help you heal, but we also give you warning signs where you have gone over, and you need to pull back on nutrients you've been putting out,” McInnis said. Surrounded by a team of brilliant minds, McInnis believes in the power of collaboration, especially for small businesses.

“Having those voices of incredibly smart team members has helped me get over the hurdle of that everyday change,” McInnis reflected.

In 2023, McInnis was awarded Alabama Rural-owned Small Business of the Year. Intrigued to learn more about the Baldwin County company AgriTech Corp.? Discover the innovative solutions and transformative journey of this trailblazing company by visiting www.soilkit.com.

BALDWIN BY THE NUMBERS

FLEXIBILITY AS A BENEFIT



15.9% of Baldwin County workers are home-based

source: U.S. Census Bureau, JobsEQ

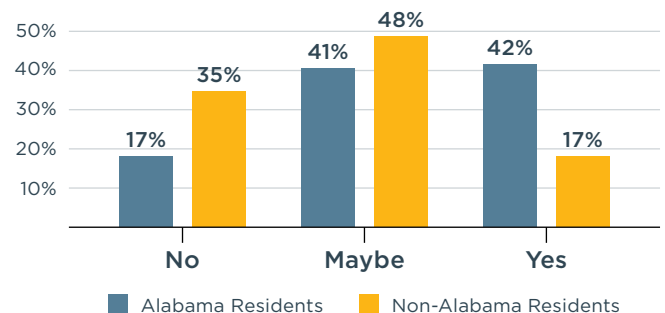


Employees value location flexibility as much as a 10% raise.

source: Local Intel

ALABAMA TALENT RETENTION

When asking 8,200+ Alabama college students if they would stay in Alabama after graduation...



Students from Alabama are more than twice as likely to choose to stay in the state compared to their counterparts from outside of Alabama. This preference for staying within their home state presents a valuable opportunity for employers to tap into a skilled workforce that is already familiar with the local environment.

source: Economic Development Partnership of Alabama