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Inductees unveiled for Birmingham Business Hall of Fame

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Nine individuals have been selected for induction in the Birmingham Business Hall of Fame. This year's list includes Birmingham bank legends, CEOs of corporate titans, advertising mavens and several entrepreneurs, innovators and community catalysts.

Founded by the [Kiwanis Club of Birmingham](#) in 1997, the Birmingham Business Hall of Fame honors individuals who have shaped the city's business world, economy and community for the better.

The individuals selected for induction at the 2021 ceremony, which is scheduled for Aug. 26, are:

- [Grayson Hall, Jr.](#) recently retired as chairman and CEO of Regions Financial Corp. in 2018. His 38-year career in banking began back in 1980 with the company predecessor AmSouth as a management trainee. Hall progressed through the ranks at AmSouth, by May 2013 he filled the roles of chairman, president, and chief operating



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Nine individuals will soon join the Birmingham Business Hall of Fame.

office. Through his leadership, Regions has become a stronger and better bank positioned for long-term success.

- John A. Hand was a leader of the Alabama banking financial community for more than 40 years. Hand began his career as a clerk of the Fourth National Bank of Macon, Georgia. Later, he became comptroller at First National Bank of Birmingham. During his administration there, the money on deposit doubled. For his lifetime of service, Samford and Alabama Universities named him an honorary doctor of law.
- Elmer B. Harris began his career at Alabama Power as a co-op student, where he progressed through the ranks to chairman and CEO from 1989 to 2002. During his time as CEO, Harris saw a need for a childcare center near Alabama Power in downtown Birmingham, which inspired him to join with other corporations to build Elmer and Glenda Harris Early Learning Center. He took advantage of his position to accomplish many things that would benefit the people of Alabama for years to come.
- Dr. Basil I. Hirschowitz created the first fully flexible endoscope while on the medical school faculty at the University of Michigan. He brought the successful device to Birmingham in 1959 and joined the UAB faculty. His endoscope has changed the medical field and how physicians diagnose their patients. Hirschowitz was elected to the Alabama Academy of Honor because of his many outstanding contributions to the medical field.
- Thomas E. Jernigan began his entrepreneurial achieved by developing a line of children's playground equipment. He founded and manufacturer different objects from furniture to developing commercial properties. Jernigan's most notable accomplishment was Marathon Equipment Co., which was recognized as the largest commercial trash compaction manufacturer in the world. Though Jernigan founded a variety of manufacturing companies, his legacy also continues through the Thomas E. Jernigan Foundation, a program in Birmingham to help churches provide holiday relief for those in need.
- Billy Charles Martin started Martin & Associates in 1959, which became Martin White & Mickwee Advertising. Later, he founded Martin Advertising, which is still prominent today. Martin had a

guiding hand in developing and growing much of the advertising industry in the Birmingham area. During his lifetime, he was honored as Advertising Man of the Year, among many other awards.

- William R. Pettiford was a minister at the 16th Street Baptist church and founder of the first financial institution, Alabama Penny Savings Bank, that was owned and operated by Blacks in the state in 1890. Pettiford is considered one of the most influential Black leaders of his time. With his influence, he petitioned Birmingham to open the first high school for Blacks. He also established the Christian Aid Society to help sick members of 16th Street Baptist Church and bury its dead.
- Dr. Shelley Stewart, often referred to as a living legend, was first known as a radio personality in the 50s and 60s. Stewart was on air for 55 years, becoming the longest-running radio talent in the country. From there, he expanded into marketing as the president and CEO of o2 ideas, one of the country's largest privately held corporate communication companies. Dr. Stewart continues to impact the community through his Mattie C. Stewart Foundation, which helps young people prepare for adulthood.
- W. Edgar Welden, Sr. has more than 40 years of experience in ownership and management of real estate properties. Welden is the founder of and business partner in various successful real estate companies, like WeldenField. He founded the Birmingham Athletic Partnership, a non-profit organization which supports Birmingham's public middle and high school athletic programs. The organization has spent over three million dollars on behalf of Birmingham school children. Welden also served as first chairman of now 2022 World Games and was instrumental in bringing them to Birmingham.

This year's induction ceremony will take place at the Harbert Center on Aug. 26, at 5:30 p.m. Tickets and corporate tables are available. You can find more information and read about past inductees here.

