



PRESS-REGISTER

Group is resource for area's young professionals

Sunday, May 25, 2008

Mobile native Tim Parker didn't know exactly what he was going to do for a living when he left Auburn University with a degree in business administration.

Having caught wind of the "economic buzz" surrounding Mobile, he said he decided to come home and see what might turn up.

Parker, 25, is now among the area's young professionals, working out of Mobile to research development opportunities throughout the Southeast for his San Francisco-based employer, The Housing Development and Neighborhood Preservation Corp.

But through a personal venture, Parker is hoping to make the move to Mobile a lot easier for others in his shoes.

Parker is the director of the Mobile Area Young Professionals Alliance, an organization begun in September to offer "a first-stop resource for early

career-seekers" considering the Mobile area.

"It was my solution to what I hoped Mobile could offer to a young professional or a recent graduate looking for professional opportunities," Parker said last week. He bills the organization, run largely through a Web presence at www.maypa.org, as a "premier resource for networking and discovering jobs in the bay area."

The group now has more than 250 members.

Parker, a Murphy High School grad, involves businesses by posting job and internship openings and encourages his members to network online as a way to start or improve their careers.

And a recent decision to collaborate with a group called Mobile Bay Young Professionals is offering additional outlets for face-to-face conversations and volunteer work.

Chris Barazza, whose full-time work is for the city of Mobile, started Mobile Bay Young Professionals in July. Also a membership organization, its concentration is in social net working, with monthly meetings or activities made available to its 50 or so members.

"My strength is events and community-based volunteerism," Barazza said last week. "People that volunteer are two to three times more likely to stay in an area. You become more vested in the community."

Parker and Barazza are now partners in the limited liability corporation Barazza developed in starting her organization. The online MAYPA operates as a wholly owned subsidiary.

A \$50 annual fee makes available the resources and programs of both groups.

Both say that their organizations include a mix of people — some with Mobile ties, some whose jobs brought them to Mobile.

"This is a scary time for our nation's young professionals, with scarce jobs and an unstable economy only adding to the "quarter-life crisis," one member wrote in response to MAYPA's questions about the choice to return to Mobile. "Mobile is prospering despite the rest of the country's uncertain future, and I wanted a stake. In a matter of weeks, I found a new job in Mobile and made the move. Yes, Mobile's 'buzz' was a sweet song to my ears."

(Readers may write K.A. Turner at the Press-Register, P.O. Box 2488, Mobile, AL 36652-2488, call her at 219-5644 or e-mail kturner@

press-register.com)

© 2008 Press-Register

© 2008 al.com All Rights Reserved.