

# Business Alabama Awards honor the best in Alabama business

CEOs, companies and others recognized at luncheon in Birmingham

By **Business Alabama Staff** - January 30, 2026



Ralph A. Hargrove was named CEO of the Year.

Winners in seven categories, in addition to four people chosen for lifetime achievement and four companies becoming the inaugural Century Club inductees, were honored at a luncheon in Birmingham on Friday, Jan. 30, as part of the Business Alabama Awards.

Scott Carpenter and Sarah Killian of NBC 13 were emcees for the event at the Harbert Center.

Winners and finalists in the seven categories were:

- **CEO of the Year – Ralph A. Hargrove, Hargrove Engineers & Constructors;** finalists were Jimmy Baker, Alabama Community College System; Chip Cherry, Huntsville/Madison County Chamber; Karen Hong, Continental Aerospace Technologies; and Mike Suco, Coca-Cola Bottling Company United.
- **Large Company of the Year – Airbus;** finalists were Birdon, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama, Protective Life; and Warrior Met Coal.
- **Small Company of the Year – Noah Basketball;** finalists were Bayonet, Prism Systems, ProjectXYZ and SkyfireAI.
- **Expat of the Year – Noopur Davis** of Comcast.
- **Startup of the Year – Kalm Therapeutics;** finalists were Auditocity, Gulf Solar, ProxyLink and VRobotics.
- **Philanthropic Project of the Year – Russell Medical Foundation gift from Russell Lands, Adelia Russell Charitable Foundation/Ben and Luanne Russell;** finalists were Leidos Gift to Drake State, Mlo's Tea bottling water for flood relief, Norfolk Southern's gift to Children's of Alabama and Toyota SA Foundation's gift to Huntsville Schools.
- **Project of the Year – Expansion of the Port of Mobile;** finalists were 17 Springs development, Alabama State University gift from MacKenzie Scott, Austal USA's production of first steel ship, Coca-Cola Amphitheater opening in Birmingham, FBI National Counter-Unmanned Training Center opening in Huntsville, Southern Research opening \$98 million facility in Birmingham, Titomic USA building new headquarters in Madison, Tuskegee University's new program for pilots, and UAB opening the Science and Engineering and Altec/Styslinger buildings.

Lifetime Achievement recipients were:

- **Raymond J. Harbert,** founder, executive chairman and former CEO of Harbert Management Corporation.
- **Dr. Marnix E. Heersink,** founder of Eye Center South, philanthropist and namesake of UAB's Heersink School of Medicine.
- **E. Grace Pilot,** co-founder of the Pilot Family of Companies, which includes Pilot Catastrophe Services.
- **Bill Roark,** founder and executive chairman of the board of Starfish Holdings.

Those inducted into the Century Club, recognizing Alabama companies 100 years old or older, were:

- Sponsor -

- **Autry Greer and Sons**
- **American Cast Iron Pipe Company**
- **Trowbridge's**
- **The Westervelt Company**

Business Alabama took nominations for the Business Alabama Awards, and a selection committee named the winners and finalists.

For more information on the Business Alabama Awards, the winners, finalists and honorees, see the February 2026 issue of Business Alabama magazine.