



Architect's rendering

# Chairman Ford Bowers is optimistic about 2021, looks forward to providing more value to members

**F**ord Bowers begins his term as chairman of the GMA/First-Point board after a tumultuous year when the organizations, like most businesses, were forced to punt, improvise, and innovate like never before. The Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on the economy, leaving no business unscathed and few aspects of everyday life unbruised.

Now that 2021 is here, no one can predict when things will once again start to resemble anything previously known as normal.

Bowers, however, is positively upbeat about GMA and its ability to serve members, even in these difficult times. He's enthused about what GMA can and will do for its member companies and their people because he saw how GMA rose to meet the challenges of 2020.

Foremost among those challenges was the suspension of in-person meetings, a necessary step in helping to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Bowers praised GMA's

Vice President Michelle Bolick and the speed with which staff shifted events of all kinds to online experiences.

"Michelle and her team have done a brilliant job of going virtual," Bowers said. "I salute them, because they have done just about as well as anyone can."

The smooth and rapid transition impressed Bowers, who added that he noticed other businesses continuing to struggle with online meetings and events long after GMA and its members had made the transition.

Bowers' position as market president for BB&T / SunTrust (now Truist Bank) affords him the opportunity to keep tabs on the state of business in the Piedmont Triad. GMA stands out, he said, continuing to live up to its mission of serving members despite a year of unprecedented challenges.

"I've now been on the GMA/FirstPoint Board for a few years, and I am looking forward to working



GMA/FirstPoint Chairman Ford Bowers is BB&T's top executive in the Greensboro market.

with Mark Prince and the FirstPoint Executive team. The level of professionalism and the commitment to giving back to the community even in a pandemic is astounding."

As market president, Bowers is responsible for the approximately 2,000 bank associates in the Greater Greensboro area. Leading the GMA board is just one of the additional civic roles that he has for 2021.

Bowers is president of the Rotary Club of Greensboro. He's also honorary co-chair of the \$1.5 million

ArtsFund campaign for ArtsGreensboro.

Bowers joined BB&T about 27 years ago after earning an MBA from Wake Forest University. He did undergraduate work at N.C. State University before transferring to UNC-Chapel Hill, where he joined Naval ROTC. Upon graduation, he was assigned to a cruiser in the Pacific fleet and served three and one-half years on active duty. He spent

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*Trends is a publication of the Guilford Merchants Association.*



2020 photo by Deborah Montgomery

### Timeless scene

The Old Mill of Guilford has witnessed revolutions, every war in the nation's history, and wild economic swings. Now it's weathering its second pandemic. Yet the business grinds on. Story, page 5.

# Staffing firm considers GMA training and development a ‘wonderful resource’

**T**RC Staffing Resources has been a GMA member for around two decades, or nearly as long as Beth Milks has been an associate with the firm.

Now the manager of the Greensboro branch office, Milks has been with the company for more than a quarter-century. TRC, based in Atlanta, is one of the nation’s largest privately held staffing firms.

“We place people in all levels of positions,” she says, “from manufacturing, production, and general warehouse to all levels of office

positions.”

A professional division focuses on helping clients fill positions in a variety of more specialized roles, such as posts in engineering, accounting, and finance.

“We really are a one-stop shop for all different kinds of placements,” she says.

One of the ironies of the pandemic, which has led to layoffs across the nation, is that TRC has plenty of jobs available, Milks says.

“There are many more jobs than there are candidates,” she explains. “We are extremely busy across the



Beth Milks is branch manager of TRC Staffing Services' Greensboro office.

board with our company, not just this location.

“We definitely feel fortunate to be as busy as we are during these crazy times and the pandemic.”

Over the years, Milks says, she’s found GMA to be “a wonderful resource” that has helped her and her colleagues. “We’ve all experienced trainings and seminars that have helped us in our growth, personally and professionally.”

Membership, she notes, adds to a company’s standing and public im-

age. “I think it speaks volumes when a company is involved in GMA,” she says. “It’s just a ‘notch of credibility’ when you are a GMA member.”

Membership, Milks says, is a two-way street. “GMA supports us, and we support them by being a member. It’s been a wonderful resource for our office.”

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**‘GMA supports us, and we support them by being a member.’**

– *Beth Milks*  
TRC Staffing Services

## 39 or younger? Look into GMA’s Risers

**Y**oung professionals and those early in their careers have unique needs and wants when it comes to professional education and networking. The GMA Risers program is designed to meet those needs.

The group has hosted a wide variety of social outings, networking meetups, and seminars geared specifically toward young professionals.

Currently all programming is online.

The Risers hold a casual monthly meetup on Zoom. The next two meetings are set for 11:30 a.m. on February 11 and March 11. Sessions are scheduled to last for one hour.

All employees of GMA member companies who are age 39 and under are invited to attend. Register on mygma.org.

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The Guilford Merchants Association is a nonprofit organization founded in 1906. The Association is a business membership organization focused on supporting member companies with educational programming, lead generation activities, marketing opportunities, and overall enrichment while serving as a catalyst for community growth and prosperity.

# What will the workplace be like after Covid-19?

BY MARK MOSER

**B**elieve it or not, a time will come when we go through our day without thinking about Covid-19.

We'll go back to attending sporting events, festivals, theaters and restaurants without a second thought. Life will return to normal. Or post-normal. Or the new normal. Or whatever you want to call it.



Moser

How will businesses and employees behave differently when that time comes? Here are some predictions. Attitudes about remote work will be different.

Some organizations that never would have allowed remote work prior to Covid-19 learned that working remotely can turn out pretty well with some employees.

Conversely, some employees who always thought it would be great to work from home discovered they actually hated it.

As a result of these mixed experiences, organizations will build processes and write policies around who can and can't work remotely and how the decision will be made.

Workers may express their dissatisfaction more assertively.

The social unrest experienced in the past year will likely expand into more calls to organize/unionize emboldened by an administra-

## BUSINESS SUCCESS

tion favorable to union interests. Since companies tend to get the union they deserve, the winners will be those organizations that are already perceived to be good places to work and are responsive to employee needs. Once the petition for a union election is filed, it's a little late to try to repair a broken culture.

There will be a lot of employee movement.

Similar to 2010-11, as we were emerging from the Great Recession, I expect to see lots of employees changing jobs for similar reasons. Some are frustrated with how they perceive they or their coworkers were treated by their employers during the Covid-19 downturn; others are simply ready for a new start.

Mid-sized organizations will look to fractional solutions for HR, finance and IT expertise.

A survival tactic learned by smart businesses during the Great Recession and again during Covid is that hiring experts in certain support functions on a fractional basis is extremely cost effective and easily scalable. I expect this trend to continue.

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Online  
8:30 a.m.  
February 17



## Take a cue from high achiever Kenyon Salo

**S**till waiting to make your first sky dive?

Motivational speaker Kenyon Salo has made more than 6,000. He's made hundreds before tens of thousands of people in a packed NFL stadium. Salo, from Colorado, is a member of the Denver Broncos Thunderstorm Skydive Team.

Ever wanted to do stand-up comedy? Salo wanted to, and he did it.

What challenging things are on your checklist?

Salo, who excels at achieving the things on his personal checklist, has

some tips about how to put a check by the items on your want-to-do list.

Salo will make a repeat appearance as a GMA Workplace Workshop speaker on February 17. Members may register for his 8:30 a.m. Zoom presentation at mygma.org.

Workplace Workshops are a free member benefit, open to all employees of GMA member companies.

Be sure to sign up in advance for Salo's presentation and learn how to become a "checklist destroyer."

## Chairman

Continued from page 1

the balance of his 20-year military career in the Naval Reserves.

Bowers said he hopes that the deadly virus will be brought under control in the coming months, now that vaccines are being administered and people are continuing to wear face masks and practice social distancing.

"We're going to have to be patient with virtual (experiences) a while longer," he said. "But I do

think this will be the year when we tiptoe back to in-person meetings."

In any event, he added, "GMA will lead the way with that transition and continue to deliver meaningful value to individuals and companies and their employees."

"I'm optimistic," he concluded. "I have my fingers crossed that we are going to have a better time of it than we had last year."



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## Alasha Jones is ‘community driven,’ and so is her company

When GMA put out the call last November for volunteers to pack bags of groceries for distribution to firefighters throughout Guilford County, Alasha Jones didn't have to think twice.

Of course she would help out. That's what she does.

Jones and a coworker gathered with other volunteers at the Hilton Garden Inn on the appointed day. In a couple of hours, the two of them packed nearly 180 bags of pantry staples in the GMA-sponsored Stock the Pantry event. Other volunteers later distributed the food to fire stations throughout the county, where firefighters on duty prepare their own meals.

“I love the community. I love to give back,” says Jones, manager for BelFlex Staffing Network's offices in Greensboro and Winston-Salem. “That's something we were taught as young kids in my family,” she adds. “It's a learned behavior.”

Jones was a longtime employee of Touch Point Staffing when that firm was purchased in 2019 by BelFlex Staffing Network. Ohio-based BelFlex, she says, “is very community driven.”

The company encourages its associates to volunteer for community service by compensating them for volunteer service during regular working hours. Each year, volunteer hours for

### VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

each BelFlex office are tabulated, Jones says. The office with the most volunteer hours is rewarded financially with a “team building incentive.”

Jones' offices have not won that award yet, she says, “but we're working on it.”

Her company's corporate stance on volunteering makes it a good fit for Jones.

“I always say, you have to have a passion for what you do, to make it not be (just) a job. So I love what I do. I love my company.”

Jones traces her enthusiasm for community and volunteering back to younger days when she was a Little League cheerleader. Today she's the cheers commissioner for Piedmont Youth Football and Cheer League, which has more than 2,000 youngsters enrolled in its programs.

Jones is also involved with Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina and is an ambassador for the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce.

“I'm always open to volunteer with GMA,” she says. “It's fun.”

“It's good to see businesses support the community,” Jones says. “That's how we can continue to grow.”  
*BelFlex Staffing Network*  
336-547-1994



Alasha Jones manages BelFlex offices in Greensboro and Winston-Salem.



Megan Ward, executive director of the Qubein Children's Museum, at the construction site.

## Qubein Children's Museum on track to open this fall in High Point

Life-size photos of 150 smiling youngsters decorate the chain-link fence encircling the construction site in downtown High Point. Come fall, when the doors open at the Nido and Mariana Qubein Children's Museum, the building will welcome excited children and their families to the city's newest attraction.

The 58,000-square-foot museum at 200 Montlieu Avenue is named for the lead donors on the project, which so far has garnered about \$28 million in contributions.

The museum's two-story main gallery, which will welcome visitors and feature a glass-walled elevator, in January was named for David R. Hayworth after his donation of \$1 million.

Megan Ward, the museum's executive director, says the facility is “going to be part of growing up in High Point” for current and future generations of children. “This is going to be a collective memory,” she says.

The museum, designed by Argyle, Inc., of New York, will offer interactive exhibits to engage youngsters from toddlers to teenagers. The firm met with elementary students and families for ideas about what the community wanted in its museum. Children wanted adventure, science, and activity. Those wishes mar-

### NEW MEMBER PROFILE

ried well with educators' goals for science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) activities.

Exhibits and activities will include:

- GiNormous, for younger children, takes its inspiration from the World's Largest Chest of Drawers, a High Point landmark that celebrates the city's furniture industry heritage. Every feature in GiNormous will be oversized and invite children inside to explore.
- Kids Point, a kid-size town with a furniture design studio, grocery store, and veterinarian's office. This feature is funded in part by a 2019 grant from the GMA/FirstPoint Foundation. GMA was an early supporter of the museum.
- A STEAM lab, allied with High Point University, where visitors can conduct experiments, build machines with LEGO, design and test

vehicles, and program robots.

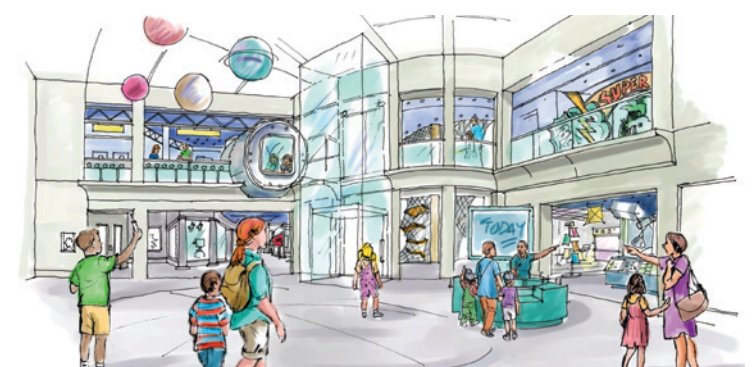
• Mars Academy, where young space travelers can practice flight skills and explore the Martian terrain.

Qubein, president of High Point University, is credited with the idea for the museum. Several years ago, on a trip with his grandchildren, he saw how excited they were to visit a children's museum. He wondered to his wife, Mariana, “Why doesn't High Point have a children's museum?”

The museum is one component in a plan to transform High Point's downtown. Other anchors of the plan include Truist Point (home of the High Point Rockers baseball team), apartments, shopping venues, and other amenities.

Ward looks forward to one day hosting community events in the Hayworth Gallery, such as a GMA After Work Network.

“I think being a member of GMA is part of being a member of the community,” she says. “It connects you.”



The main gallery will be named for donor David R. Hayworth.

# Old Mill of Guilford

*Where the key to success is doing things the old-fashioned way*

Everything has changed and not much has changed since mill stones first turned on Beaver Creek. That was in 1767 in what's now called Oak Ridge.

The mission then, as now, was simple: to grind grain. Corn meal was a staple of colonial diets, and mills could be found all across North Carolina. They provided a necessary service for settler-farmers in an era when all food was local.

Today the grains ground on Beaver Creek are still prized by cooks. Over the years corn meal has been joined by a range of other products including grits, polenta, and buckwheat flour, all stone ground. Local restaurants, such as Lucky 32, feature Old Mill grains on their menus.

Chefs far beyond North Carolina, serviced by food distributors, also depend on the Old Mill's stone-ground products.

Just recently, a chef in Paris posted on Instagram about how much he liked the Old Mill's grits.

The thought of it makes Darrell Klug break into a grin. He and his wife, Amy, have owned the mill since 2008. They are the latest in a string of owners that go back more than 250 years.

Except for a couple of years in the 1970s, when the mill was between owners, the mill has been in continuous operation.

Annie Laura Perdue, who has worked at the Old Mill for 30 years, is the miller. She learned the trade from the previous owner and knows how to read the mill's every vibration and rumble. Now she's passing that knowledge along to Amy Klug. It's infor-

mation that can't be written down, only learned by doing.

Temperature and humidity, plus the moisture content of the grain, create a slew of variables that the miller must consider to get a consistent grind.

"She uses all of her senses," Darrell Klug says, to keep the quality consistent.

There's still a water wheel, but a massive electric motor now turns the ancient stones.

**PIEDMONT TRIAD PLACES**



Owners Darrell and Amy Klug.

The whole mill thrums during grinding, and grain dust shimmers in the air.

The Klugs, who previously had worked in marketing, bought the mill just in time for the Great Recession. "It was a leap of faith," Amy Klug says.

The pandemic brought new challenges; sales fell off sharply as restaurants shuttered. But then a favorable mention in the hospitality press brought a rush of online orders that has remained strong.

"It's not been easy," Darrell Klug says, "and there's a lot of stresses. But it's been a good thing. We have the support of a lot of people."

Old Mill of Guilford  
1340 N.C. 68 North  
Oak Ridge, N.C.  
oldmillofguilford.com



Miller Annie Laura Perdue (left) helps Amy and Darrell Klug prepare orders for shipment.



Left: Perdue fills a hopper with 150 pounds of corn to be ground.

Below: Dried corn, after milling, can become grits, polenta, or other products.



Above: A sign erected by the town of Oak Ridge notes that the mill is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Left: The Old Mill's retail shop. Visitors are welcome on the property.



Darrell Klug hauls a load of product ready to be shipped to customers.



Josh Seibert had a career in corporate training and development before opening his Sandler Training business in 1999.

## Josh Seibert of Sandler Training reflects on two decades with GMA

Josh Seibert opened his Sandler Training franchise in August 1999. Within weeks, he was invited to be a guest at a GMA Competitive Advantage Networking (CAN) group meeting. Seibert joined GMA and CAN and quickly became one of the organization's most faithful members and boosters.

*Trends* asked Seibert about his more than two decades of membership. The following, edited for brevity, is what he had to say.

•••

My previous position before opening this company was director of training and development for Prudential Financial. My office was in the New York City area. I was on airplanes all the time. My last year with them, I did 256 nights in hotels.

That company brought me to Greensboro in 1992, and I climbed the corporate ladder. They finally said, we want you to move to Newark. But I just didn't want to move. So I went off and opened this company.

And I very quickly realized that I didn't know any

### LOYAL MEMBER

business people around Greensboro, because I'd been on the road all the time. So getting acquainted in the business community was a priority.

Thank goodness for Roberta Wall. She had a staffing agency and was in another leads group I joined. She invited me to a meeting of GMA's CAN group.

That was the best invitation I ever got. That group opened my eyes to the opportunity that GMA truly has.

GMA showed me local business owners that had the same mindset ... the abundance mindset.

One of the first lessons I learned was Emerson's Law of Compensation. If you want more, you have to be willing to give more, without any expectation of return.

GMA is about connecting like-minded business people, locally. And I thought, this is the place for me.

It became obvious that this was about networking. The deeper you get, the more you start learning about the value of participation. The help I got just happened. The help was there because people had been where I was. I was a startup business.

They were able to provide, truly, Emerson's Law of Compensation. They were willing to give more than I was; they were able to spend the time and the resources because of that dynamic. It's what happened.

They did it, and 20 years later, I find myself doing the same thing.

It's wonderful to be on the backside of this hump, to be able to give back. I just know what it does. It comes back tenfold.

We grew in GMA. If you intend to do business and build a brand locally, GMA's the place to do it. We're still with GMA. There's no question.

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### MEMBERS SHARE

**Other than being with family and friends, what have you missed the most in the last year?**

Answers from members of the Networking Gurus, one of GMA's membership networking groups.

**"I miss the freedom to travel and visit new destinations and cultures around the globe."**

*Tom Pullara  
Dream Vacations*



**"I miss seeing my fellow Networking Gurus. I miss teaching in person. And I really miss the Grasshoppers games!"**

*Jay Vics  
JVI Mobile Media*

**"I miss the loss of the personal interaction that we all experienced prior to the pandemic."**

*John Passmore  
JP Mortgage Consultants*



**"Being an outgoing person in sales, I miss the the in-person meetings, which would include the After Work and Noontime Network events, where you can make multiple contacts. Zoom meetings are great, but it I miss the personal connection."**

*Bill Porter  
MI-BOX Moving  
and Mobile Storage*



The team at Culinary Visions Catering, led by Gene Dolan (right).

# MEMBER SALUTE

GMA members are comprised of businesses of all types and sizes. Here's a glimpse of some members in the places where they do what they do.



Rob Whitestone of Cottman Transmission.



Dan Tucker, president of BMP Print Solutions.



Mike Murray, owner of New Leaf Graphics.



Lisa Cooper and Lorna Miller of Simmons Office Furniture.



Owner Chris Brewer (right) and the team at Bravo Signs.



Tom Needham of Tom Needham Insurance.

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