

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Leading Businesses.  
Leading Communities.™



416 North Ashley Street P.O. Box 790 Valdosta, GA 31603  
229.247.8100 FAX 229.245.0071 ebutler@valdostachamber.com  
Contact: Evan Butler-Sands

July 16, 2008

**For Immediate Release**

**U.S. Chamber Awards Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber with 5-Star Accreditation**

The United States Chamber of Commerce has awarded the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber with 5-Star Accreditation for its sound policies, effective organizational procedures, and positive impact on the community.

“Accreditation recognizes chambers for their high standards of practice, full accountability to members, and steadfast commitment to community,” said Thomas J. Donohue, president and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce. “We applaud these organizations for advancing these principles of free enterprise.”

Accreditation is the only national program that recognizes chambers for their effective organizational procedures and community involvement. In order to receive Accreditation, a chamber must meet minimum standards in their operations and programs, including areas of governance, government affairs, and technology.

The only program of its kind in the country, U.S. Chamber Accreditation recognizes an organization for its quality programs, clear organizational procedures, and being a catalyst for positive action in their community. To achieve accreditation, a chamber must meet minimum standards in their operations and programs, including areas of governance, government affairs, and technology. This extensive self-review took a full year for our Chamber to complete. Of the 6,936 chambers of commerce in the U.S., only 4% are accredited; only 44 chambers nationwide are Accredited with 5-Stars (less than 1%).

"Our Reaccreditation Task Force began their work in March 2007, during the Chairmanship of Nick Valenti (Valenti, Rackley & Associates) and under the leadership of Task Force Chairman James Bridges, former president of Valdosta Technical College," said current Chamber Chairman of the Board Walter Hobgood (Express Employment Professionals). "The process required literally hundreds of hours of volunteer and staff time to complete, but the investment was worth it -- it helped us to build an even better Chamber to serve our 1,559 members."

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Leading Businesses.  
Leading Communities.™



“One way a chamber may know how effectively its organization meets the needs of the community it serves is to compare itself to other chambers charged with similar community requirements,” said Bridges. “Accreditation is a process for making these comparisons.”

Chambers are rated Accredited, 3-Stars, 4-Stars, or 5-Stars. A final determination is made by the Accrediting Board, a committee of U.S. Chamber Board members.

“In late 2007, the U.S. Chamber's Accrediting Board approved a new edition of the Accreditation application that retains the same stringent requirements that have defined the Accreditation program for over forty years, yet added additional measures that better evaluate chamber excellence in the twenty-first century,” said Mathew Wasserburger, Accreditation Manager for the U.S. Chamber. “The Valdosta – Lowndes Chamber is a pioneer, becoming one of the first chambers in the United States to use the new Accreditation system and *the first* to remarkably achieve our highest designation: Accredited with 5-Stars. This new application gave our consultants the tools to successfully evaluate the Valdosta – Lowndes Chamber and determine that this chamber is an innovative industry leader working to provide a successful business environment for its members,” Wasserburger added.

###