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ALBBAA founder Thomas Harris to be inducted into Alabama Business Hall of Fame

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Nov. 7, 2024) – Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association (ALBBAA) founder and president Thomas Harris will be honored next week as a new member of the Alabama Business Hall of Fame.

Harris, a resident of Hope Hull in Lowndes County, was [selected as a member of the seven-member Class of 2024](#) earlier this year, alongside legendary Alabama coach Nick Saban.

“As an avid bird hunter and life-long resident of Montgomery, Thomas has been a long-time champion of Alabama’s Black Belt. So, it’s fitting that he is being inducted alongside championship football coach Nick Saban,” ALBBAA director Pam Swanner said. “His tireless dedication working to promote outdoor recreation and tourism has sparked growth and development throughout our 23-county footprint.

“He is more than a successful businessman,” Swanner continued. “He’s a visionary leader whose determined spirit is aimed at making the Black Belt and all of Alabama a better place to live and work, and I’m grateful he’s being honored for the numerous contributions that have positively impacted all Alabamians.”

[Harris, Saban and five other inductees will be honored](#) on Thursday, Nov. 14, at Haven in Birmingham. [The Alabama Business Hall of Fame](#) is located in Hewson Hall on The University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa.

A successful investment banker and entrepreneur, Harris first worked for First Alabama Bankshares as head of national accounts and business development after graduating from Auburn University in 1971.

In 1987, he founded and became president of Merchant Capital, a Montgomery-based investment banking firm that grew to have offices throughout the Southeast. In 2014, Stifel Nicolaus Financial Corp. acquired Merchant Capital, and Harris served as senior managing director at Stifel Nicolaus until 2022.

In 2021, he founded Birmingham Recovery Center and Longleaf Wellness and Recovery Centers, which provide substance abuse and mental health treatment at four facilities in Alabama. In 2023, he partnered in launching YHN Media Group, LLC, which owns several Alabama-based media outlets.

“Thomas Harris distinguished himself as one of Alabama’s top executives because he found success in numerous business ventures throughout his career,” said Greenville Mayor Dexter McLendon, who serves on the ALBBAA board with Harris. “I am overjoyed to see him honored as an inductee into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame. I’m fortunate to know him on a personal and professional level, and I know the Hall of Fame could not have made a better choice.”

An avid conservationist, Harris founded and serves as president of the non-profit ALBBAA, which is committed to promoting outdoor recreation and tourism throughout the Alabama Black Belt. He also serves on the national board of directors for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever.

In 2019, Harris received [the Alabama Wildlife Federation’s Governor’s Conservationist of the Year Award](#).

Harris, a lifelong Black Belt resident, and his wife, Cindy, have four children and seven grandchildren.

“I am truly humbled to be included in the Class of 2024 for the Alabama Business Hall of Fame,” Harris said. “It’s an honor I did not expect, but one that I will cherish forever.”

The Black Belt includes the following 23 counties: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Sumter, Tuscaloosa and Wilcox.

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The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association is committed to promoting and enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the Black Belt in a manner that provides economic and ecological benefits to the region and its citizens. For information, go to [**www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org**](http://www.alabamablackbeltadventures.org).