

The Rainer Bauer award was established in honor and recognition of Mr. Rainer Bauer-a German Businessman and entrepreneur -who for decades-has been a friend of Alabama and constant supporter of the Alabama-Germany connection. The award is given annually since 2001 to an individual who has contributed significantly to the advancement of the German-Alabama relationship in general and the mission of the Alabama-Germany Partnership in particular.

Mr. Bauer had many contacts with the State of Alabama before Mercedes Benz was here. During his time In Alabama Mr. Bauer developed a positive and personal relationship within the economic development community. He opened doors between Alabama and Germany for many years. Because of this dedication and loyal friendship to Alabama, AGP chose to name the award after him, to honor him.

The recipient of the first year's award was Mr. Rainer Bauer that continues to be a friend of Alabama and a constant supporter. Mr. Bauer currently lives in Esslingen, Germany near Stuttgart. It is with regrets that he could not make tonight.

The recipient of this special award this year grew up in Germany and joined the German Army Aviation right after high school. He became an officer, helicopter pilot and finished with an engineering degree in aerospace technology

at the University of the German Armed Forces in Munich. He was in Alabama for the first time in 1989 when he completed his helicopter basic flight training in Fort Rucker, Alabama.

It came time to leave the German Army in 1995 and he started to work for REHAU in the small town of northern part of Bavaria. He came back to Alabama in 1998 as a plant manager for our community's first Tier 1 automotive supplier where I met him for the first time.

His management skills and leadership grew the automotive polymer injection company to an operation that at times exceeded 1,000 associates. He along with his wife and three young children all settled in our community and his manufacturing operation became our largest international company.

In his new home in North Alabama he quickly became a part of the community serving on the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors; Chairman of United Way, member of the Rotary Club and other community organizations too numerous to mention. And it goes without saying that he has been a loyal Member of the Alabama Germany Partnership.

Germany had his allegiance for 54 years, but he became a US Citizen in March of 2018. What greater personal example of strengthening the Alabama-Germany relationship than with a

man who was educated, worked and is a citizens of both counties?

I spent the greater part of four decades in economic development recruiting new companies and helping others to expand. Our honoree this evening became a marketing legend for our community and the State of Alabama. He never missed an opportunity to discuss the great capabilities of the Alabama worker and gave high marks to the support he received from the community, the Governor's office, Department of Commerce and others.

In 2006 he left our community for other adventures but he returned in 2012. It was a happy day for Dale Greer and I who had a secret wish that he would return one day to assume his role as our biggest supporter. He had been sorely missed as a key member of our economic development team!

The following year, Tine, the new executive director of AGP met with the newly returned REHAU plant manager and recalls a meeting with a dynamic German that called himself a Southern boy. His love for the South was clear but at the same time he was also direct about the areas where he felt Alabama could learn from Germany- like in the field of apprenticeship. Before she left that day he had suggested forming a group of leaders from the German companies in

Alabama that could be and share experiences plus guide and offer free support to new German companies.

I give him credit for some of the successes we had in Cullman, but will also tell you there are other Alabama communities who located companies because of the glowing remarks he made about the state.

He championed workforce development and training programs in our community and many more on a statewide level. This is where his German roots and understanding of apprenticeship programs and technical training in Germany blended with the quality aspects of the Alabama workforce.

Some two years ago as I celebrated my retirement among friends and longtime business associates, he presented me with one of my most precious gifts I could ever imagine: He named the conference room at REHAU Cullman the Peggy Smith Conference Room. If you're at any REHAU facility worldwide and wish to book a conference room it is known as the Peggy Smith Room. What greater honor can any economic developer receive? And so I worry that I can't do him justice with just my remarks tonight about how much I respect him personally and professionally. We, the Cullman community owe him so much and he has given unselfishly to our community and to the economic development efforts locally. I'm honored to be here standing before you for this

very special occasion for this wonderful individual who is so deserving and who I call a friend. I think Rainer Bauer would be proud of the man you are recognizing tonight.

Please join me in congratulating our 2020 Rainer Bauer Award recipient, Albert von Pelsler Berensberg!