

INVENTORY ON HAND

# McAleer's Office Furniture in Mobile and Foley Can Outfit an Office Fast

MELISSA MCALEER CROSS HAS A PASSION FOR SMALL BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE GULF COAST REGION

Story by Nancy King Dennis. Photo by Brandon Robbins.



*Melissa Cross became president of McAleer's Office Furniture in 2012. In 2022, she added owner to her title after buying the business from her father.*

**M**elissa McAleer Cross is president and owner of McAleer's Office Furniture in Mobile, Pensacola and soon to be in Foley.

Her titles also include daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, lawyer, mentor, entrepreneur and businesswoman extraordinaire.

Raised in Mobile, Melissa is the fourth of the seven children of Jim and Camilla McAleer. She says she didn't set out to take the helm of the business her parents began in 1979.

After finishing undergraduate studies at the University of Alabama, she headed off to law school in California, where she practiced law for several years. Her career path then took her to various roles in real estate, homebuilding and office furniture manufacturing and states as far away as Texas and Iowa.

In 2012, with a nudge from an older brother, she answered her father's call and came back to Alabama as president of the family business.

"My brother, David, who manages the Pensacola store, was an integral part in Dad getting me back," Melissa said. "Dad would ask, and I kept saying, 'No,' then David called and said, 'You really need to do this.'"

"I ended up having the right experience to be the exact right person to run the stores," she said. While her father remained the owner, he took a soft retirement in 2015 and Melissa stayed on as president. Earlier this year, Melissa bought the 43-year-old business from her father.

"I wasn't expecting it to feel different, because I've been running it for so long, but immediately it felt different," said Melissa.

"It is a bigger responsibility, but it's also a lot more rewarding," she said. "As owner, you are more in charge of your own destiny."

Early next year in Foley, McAleer's Office Furniture will open its third store with Melissa's younger sister, Sarah McAleer, as manager.

"I love that I have people I can trust, people I love who are so invested in the business working with me," she said.

## All About Inventory

"At our core, we have always been a retail store that can deliver as soon as the next business day," said Melissa of her Gulf Coast retail and contract office furniture business that has nearly \$1 million of in-stock inventory, ready for same-day pickup or next-day delivery. Between its three locations, McAleer's Office Furniture has 75,000-square-feet of space.

"People want furniture tomorrow. They don't want to wait six weeks for it," Jim McAleer said in a 2015 interview when

he and Melissa were named the Gold Alabama Retailers of the Year Award in the Annual Sales \$1 Million to \$5 Million category. By 2021, Melissa had grown the company to more than \$6 million in annual sales and earned the Silver title in a greater sales category.

With recent supply chain issues, wait times for furniture has grown to six months, but not necessarily at McAleer's.

"We still have a long lead time with some of our contract specialty furniture, but for the

bulk of what we sell, we can literally outfit your office next week with what we have in stock," said Melissa.

## Sharing the Passion

Melissa spreads her passion for entrepreneurship, small business and economic development in the Gulf Coast region throughout her community. She serves on the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's board and chaired its total resource campaign in 2020 and 2021, leading a team that exceeded the campaign's goal both years. And she serves on the advisory board for the Melton Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of South Alabama.

Melissa also participates in two mentoring programs – Real Advice Mentoring Program, or RAMP, a program developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Innovation Portal, a Mobile start-up incubator that connects its members with mentors.

Melissa has a "contagious energy" and "positive personality" that "makes her a force to be reckoned with," said Sherry Coker, vice president/private banking manager with River Bank & Trust. ■



*McAleer's Office Furniture in Mobile and Pensacola, Fla., employs 20 full time and is open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Visit online at [mcaleers.com](http://mcaleers.com)*