

# THIS IS ALABAMA

## World's visit will be a game-changer

In January 2015, the International World Games Association (IWGA) delivered a landmark announcement to the city of Birmingham and the state of Alabama. IWGA, under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee, evaluated potential host cities across the world for the 2021 World Games, and, after thoughtful deliberation, they selected Birmingham, Alabama.



Even more impressive is that Birmingham will be the first U.S. city to host the World Games since 1981, which means we must make this a tremendous experience for everyone.

These games mean the world to Birmingham, but we know this opportunity is bigger than our city and state. We are representing our nation. It's about showcasing and celebrating sports from across the world and offering a world-class environment for participants and attendees. In Birmingham, we are known for our Southern hospitality, and we plan to bring that reputation to life for all who visit our city for the World Games.

The World Games will attract more than 4,000 athletes from across the globe, and will generate an economic impact of \$256.5 million for our region and state. The games have the potential to be the largest sporting event ever in our state and possibly the second-largest in the Southeast behind the 1996 Olympics. The stakes are high, and we must rise to the occasion.

People across the world will be watching our city and state in 2021, so we must think big, collaborate and take advantage of our different talents to make this a success. I am confident we will reach our goals, make connections and create an unforgettable experience. We look forward to celebrating with you on July 15–25, 2021.

*Jonathan Porter is vice president of the Birmingham division at Alabama Power Company and chairman of the World Games Birmingham 2021.*

### Alabama by the numbers

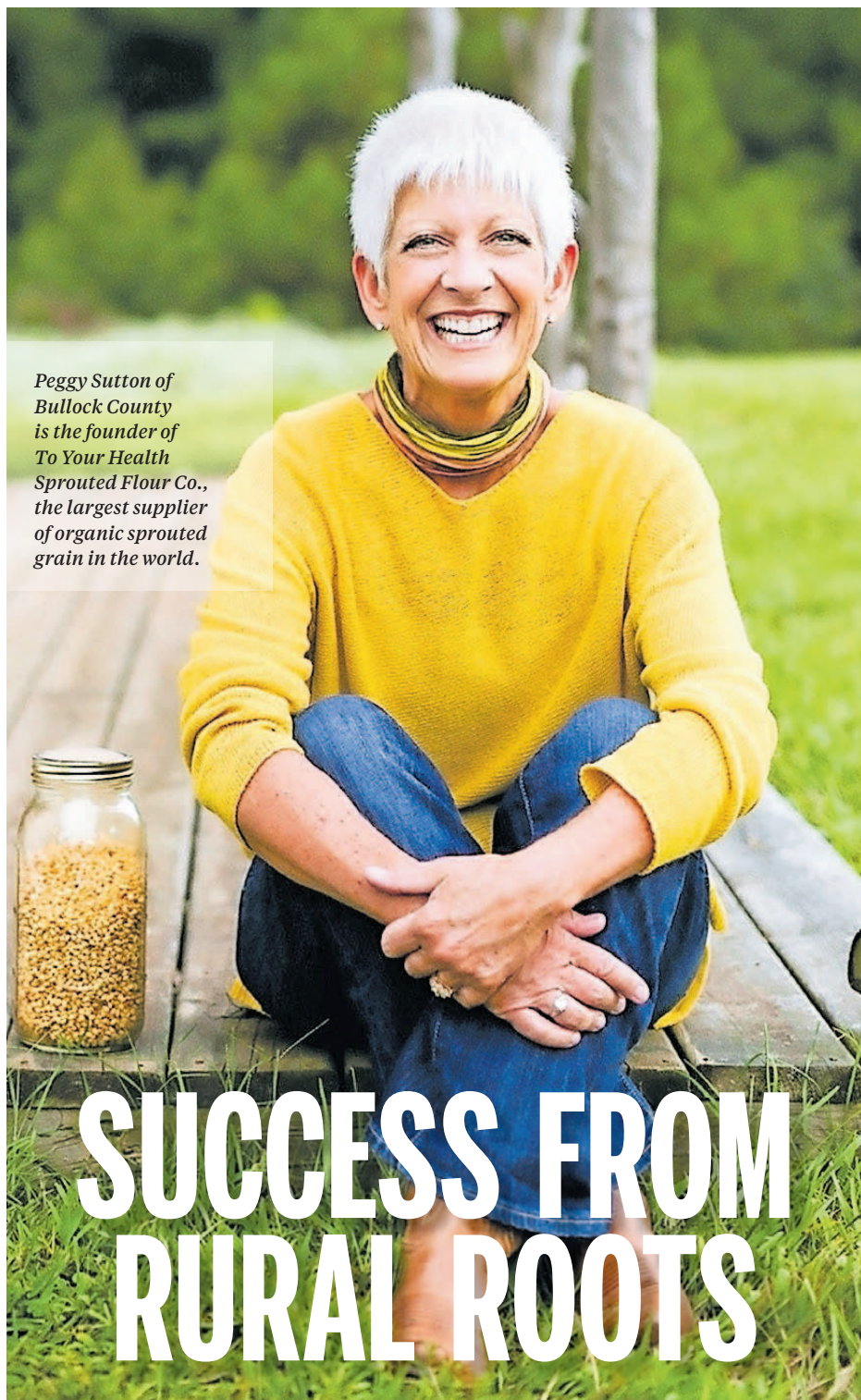
**\$13 billion**

Estimated value of the state poultry industry, which has an estimated 86,000 people working in agriculture, production and other occupations.



### Know the best hardware store?

Lewter Hardware, open since 1928 in downtown Huntsville, was recognized as one of the best hardware stores in America in Popular Mechanics in 2016.



*Peggy Sutton of Bullock County is the founder of To Your Health Sprouted Flour Co., the largest supplier of organic sprouted grain in the world.*

## SUCCESS FROM RURAL ROOTS

Courtesy To Your Health Sprouted Flour

### GRAINS GROWN BY A SOUTH ALABAMA MANUFACTURER TRAVEL AROUND WORLD

Over a decade after experimenting with sprouted grain recipes in her kitchen in Fitzpatrick, Alabama, Peggy Sutton now owns To Your Health Sprouted Flour Co., one of the largest sprouted-grain businesses in the world.

At the root of Sutton's success: organic grains left in the field until they sprout. During the natural sprouting process, the tiny plant embryos lying dormant in the grains common to our diets (wheat, barley, rice) are allowed to break through their protective outer kernel. According to Sutton, these germinated seeds are easier to digest, more nutritious and taste fantastic.

To Your Health's largest export is its signature sprouted flour, but the company also offers sprouted snacks like popcorn, sunflower seeds and even grits.

Initially, Sutton only sold homemade baked goods made from sprouted flour to friends and family. By 2008, the company transitioned to selling only flour and grains, with average weekly sales measuring about 200 pounds of product a week.

A year later, a game-changing phone call from grocery chain Whole Foods ended in a request for 5,000 pounds of various To Your Health flours.

In 2014, Sutton received another surprise phone call. This time, Kellogg's organic cereal manufacturer Kashi reached out and asked to use her sprouted grain in a new cereal. Impressed with the quality of the product and To Your Health's homegrown story, Kashi decided to put Sutton on the back of the cereal's box.

"You don't necessarily think of the forefront of natural organic foods being in rural Alabama," said Dave Uzzell, Kashi senior brand manager. "From our

perspective, it was just part of her mystique, part of her story."

"I told my husband, it's not the front of the Wheaties box, but I'm not complaining!" laughed Sutton.

The company has over 30 full-time employees and produces 80,000 pounds of flour a week in a 42,000 square foot facility located just off Highway 82 in Bullock County. Sutton's products are found not only in U.S. stores, but shipped internationally to 17 different countries, including Mexico, Canada and the U.K.

Despite the company's worldwide success, Sutton has no intentions of uprooting her business from the town she has always called home. All but four of the company's 30-plus employees are long-time residents of Bullock County.

Her business has also influenced the county's water infrastructure. When a third expansion to their facilities threatened neighbors' access to water, To Your Health contacted the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) and worked to acquire a \$200,000 grant to install new 8-inch water pipes along Highway 82.

"The feedback has been tremendously positive. To Your Health is a true rural Alabama success story," said Jim Byard Jr., who was director of ADECA at the time.

For the future, Sutton and her husband, To Your Health CEO Jeff Sutton, hope to form a protective coalition with others in the burgeoning sprouted grain business to preserve the natural process' organic integrity.

As the seeds of their influence spread, the sprouted movement will always have roots in the Heart of Dixie.

*Written for This Is Alabama by Reed Strength.*

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