



Mercedes-Benz's decision to open a plant in Alabama sparked an interest in improving relations between Alabama and Germany. In 1997, the Birmingham International Festival (BIF), an award winning internationally recognized event and oldest event of its kind in the United States, highlighted Germany with its international salute. The mission of the BIF is to "promote mutual understanding between cultures through art, education and economic development programs." Many volunteers spent many hours planning the Salute to Germany. As a result of the connections made and the relationships built during the planning and implementation of the Salute to Germany, a group of interested businesses and individuals across the state had the idea to start a non-profit organization which utilized and built upon those connections and relationships. Thus, in 1998 the **AlabamaGermany Partnership** was formed.