

VISION WEST

West Baton Rouge Parish - Community, Growth, Possibilities

A quarterly publication for West Baton Rouge residents by your public agencies • January, 2015

Calendar of Events

Jan. 24- April 5 – Apron Chronicles exhibit at WBR Museum

Feb. 8 - Addis Volunteer Fire Department Mardi Gras Parade

Feb. 15 - Krewe of Good Friends Parade – Port Allen

Feb. 19 – WBR Museum Volunteer Appreciation Coffee

Feb. 28 – Dance performance on BR bus 1953 boycott at WBR Museum

March 12-15 – Dulcimer Fete at WBR Museum

March 19 – Lunch book lecture – Southeast Louisiana Food: A Seasoned Tradition at WBR Museum

March 28-April 30 – Talented Art Student Exhibit at WBR Museum – opening reception on March 28

March 28 – Easter Egg Hunt in City of Port Allen

April 10-12 - Kite Fest Louisiana'

April 18-Aug. 16 – Major Civil War exhibit to mark end of 1865 end of the war at WBR Museum

Road, capital projects for 2015 listed

The Parish of West Baton Rouge has numerous capital improvement projects on tap for 2015, involving both infrastructure and recreational needs in the parish.

Among the infrastructure projects are the following:

- **The Rosedale Road culvert and sidewalk project** - which will extend culverts and sidewalks from La. Hwy. 1 westward about eight tenths of a mile to "Three Canal." The parish received a state grant for 80 percent of the cost of that project, and will fund 20 percent.

- **Lukeville area sewer improvement project** - This will include the construction of a gravity wastewater collection system, force mains, service lines and connection into some 40 residences along La. Hwy. 989-1 from Rambin Road to the Lukeville Lane Extension. The parish received a \$666,000 LCDBG grant for the project, and will add another \$261,600 to fund the project, which will eliminate open ditches in the area.

- **Retrofitting lights at the WBR Courthouse** - The parish will be retrofitting all the interior and exterior lights at the Courthouse and WBR Detention Center for more efficient light bulbs at a cost of about \$100,000.

- **Road improvements** - Some \$3 million will be spent on road improvement projects throughout the parish.

Among the bigger projects are the replacement of the Oak Street and Cypress Street bridges, Landry Lane overlay, Commercial/Westport/Charles Drive repairs, and the Airline Park to Poydras Bayou connector. Other streets are included for overlays. The parish is also doing engineering work in 2015 for construction of the Sid Richardson Road connector and Choctaw Road-Ed LeJeune Road connector, with construction to begin in 2016.

Among the recreation projects for 2015 are:

- **The levee top trails project** (see page 3) - the parish received grants totalling 80 percent of the project, and will contribute the other 20 percent for phases 1 and 2 of the levee trail in Brusly. The parish and City of Port Allen also have a cooperative endeavor to extend the levee trail in Port Allen, and that project is expected to begin in the Spring.

- **The construction of a skateboard park** at Alexander Park (see below).

- **Erwinville Park parking lot overlay** - \$100,000.

- **Demolition of the old concession stand and field improvements at Rivault Park** - \$100,000.

- **Numerous other additions and improvements at parks throughout the parish**, and improvements at the community centers across the parish.



SKATE PARK, MORE PLAYGROUNDS

A skateboard park will be constructed at Alexander Park in Brusly this Spring by the West Baton Rouge Recreation

Department. It is expected to be operational by this summer. And, new playgrounds are planned at Lukeville Park/school, Williams & Lee Park, Mulatto Bend Park and Winterville Park this year, said Recreation Director Anatole Vincent. The projects will cost approximately \$125,000. Vincent said another skate park will be installed at Rivault Park in Port Allen next year. Above is a rendering of the skate park.

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WBR PARISH COUNCIL - Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Parish Council Building, 225-383-4755, www.wbr council.org

WBR PARISH SCHOOL BOARD - Committee meetings on 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. School Board meetings on 3rd Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. at the School Board office, 225-343-8309, www.wbrschools.net

WBR PLANNING & ZONING

COMMISSION - Meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Council meeting room in the Parish Council Building.

TOWN OF ADDIS - Meets on 1st Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Addis Town Hall. Phone: 225-687-4844, www.addisla.org

CITY OF PORT ALLEN - Committee meetings on 1st Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Town council meetings on 2nd Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m., 225-346-5670, www.portallen.org

TOWN OF BRUSLY - Committee meetings on 1st Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Town Council meetings on 2nd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., 225-749-2909, www.bruslyla.com

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Museum features for coming months

WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM

Annual Talented Art Student Exhibit opens March 28

The West Baton Rouge Museum in partnership with the West Baton Rouge Parish Public School System hosts the Annual Talented Art Student Exhibition opening March 28 and running through May 3.

SAVE THE DATE Blast from the Past

West Baton Rouge Museum announces that registration begins March 2 for the Blast from the Past Summer History Camp.

WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

WBR Library meets need for "Information, Education, Recreation"

A new year is cause for reflection – where you've been, where you're headed, and how you plan to get there.

The "opening day collection" in July 1933 numbered 345 books; it now numbers 90,505. In executing our mission of providing "Information, Education, and Recreation,"

In January, the library added a "laptop station," where people can plug in and work on their own laptops, similar to what airports offer.

The library's meeting room now offers state-of-the-art equipment to enhance community meetings.

- February 19, 3-5 p.m.: Volunteer Appreciation Coffee, awards, and recognition of the newly established Frank Carruth III Children's Fund.
February 26, noon: Lunchtime Lecture "Charity Hospital of New Orleans" presented by Dr. Thomas Durant and Dr. Johnathan Roberts.
February 28, 2 p.m.: Dance performance "Fading Line" presented in partnership with the Manship Theatre at the museum.

- Book Signing featuring author Addie Martin, with her new book Southeast Louisiana Food: A Seasoned Tradition. Free.
March 28 - April 30: Talented Art Student Exhibition. The annual exhibit showcases the work of WBR students.
March 28 Student Art Show opening reception 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.: Dance performance by the Manship Theatre entitled "Flamenco Dancers," and apron making family craft workshop.

Frank Carruth III Children's Fund established

The West Baton Rouge Museum is pleased to announce the newly established Frank Carruth III Children's Fund. The fund was made possible by a generous donation from The Frank Carruth III Foundation.



Pictured with the donation are, from left, Stacy Ryan, Marsha Best Turner, Tom Acosta, chairman of the West Baton Rouge Museum Board; Julie Rose, museum director; and Jeannie Luckett, education curator.

A 57-inch SmartBoard and large flat-screen television are available, and new chairs should arrive by the end of January. Students can Skype with an author, businesses can train employees by videoconferencing, programs can be enhanced with PowerPoint presentations, and more.

Funding for West Baton Rouge Parish Library is provided by a property tax millage that must be renewed every ten years by the voters. The library board and staff are grateful that the library millage renewal was approved last November!



SmartBoard added to meeting room

West Baton Rouge Parish Library has added a large SmartBoard to the equipment available in the meeting room for community use.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:

VISION WEST is published quarterly as a cooperative endeavor of West Baton Rouge Parish government agencies to educate residents about projects, activities and services in the parish. It is produced by Peacock Communications, LLC. Comments can be sent to: ellie@peacockcommunications.com, or call 225-929-9661.



WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH GOVERNMENT



LEVEE TRAIL PROJECT BEGINS BY FEBRUARY

The first phase of the new levee trail in Brusly will begin by February and should be completed within 75 days, weather permitting. Phase one includes constructing the South End Levee Trailhead at the end of Main Street and the Mississippi River levee. The second phase, which is a 3-mile levee trail extending 1 1/2 miles to the north and 1 1/2 miles to the south from the trailhead, will begin later this year. Shown above are renderings of how the trail will look from Main Street and from the levee top. The parish received grants to fund 80 percent of this work. The parish is also assisting the City of Port Allen with funding an extension of the levee top trail in Port Allen in 2015.

2015 brings new WBR staff members

WBR residents will see new faces in two key positions in parish government in 2015. Parish Council Clerk Sharon Zito retired after 34 and a half years of service, and the Council has chosen Michelle Tullier as the new clerk. Also, Mary Delapasse, who was the Keep West Baton Rouge Beautiful director since its inception, has resigned, and Tammy Allen has been selected as the new director.

West Baton Rouge thanks Sharon and Mary for their service to the parish!

Parish not endorsing insurance offer

Some West Baton Rouge residents have received a mail offer for water line insurance. This mail offer is not affiliated in any way or endorsed by the West Baton Rouge Utilities Department or the Parish of West Baton Rouge. The parish recommends that residents contact the Better Business Bureau with any questions concerning these insurance policies.

Natural gas/water policy changes

As of November 1, 2014:

If your gas and/or water services are disconnected for non-payment, you MUST pay the ENTIRE bill, PLUS the reconnect fee, before services will be restored.

Requests for after hour turns on will NOT be accepted after 8 p.m. If your services have been unlocked during working hours and no one was home for our technician to turn on the services, an additional fee will be charged for the technician to return after hours to turn on your meter and/or light your pilot lights. Please remember: if no one is home, the technician can ONLY unlock the meters, so you must turn on the meter(s) yourself.

West Baton Rouge forecast for 2015



Hello and Happy New Year,
As we look to the year ahead, I am optimistic for West Baton Rouge Parish. All indicators point to continued steady growth and a stable economy.

Building permits have steadily increased and sales tax revenue collected has reached record levels for two consecutive years, largely due to industrial expansions.

This surplus will be used for non recurring capital outlay projects with approximately \$3,000,000 of those dollars being used on road projects.

Even with those infrastructure improvements, we continue to struggle with traffic issues on State Highway LA 1, especially near the Intracoastal overpass. There is no quick fix for this, however the Parish Council and I continue to work with representatives from LA DOTD, the Louisiana Legislative Delegation, private investors and others for solutions to this growing concern.

I appreciate the public support shown with the renewals of the drainage, library and recreation millage during the November election of 2014. I also appreciate the good working relationship I have had with the leaders of the local municipalities and with leaders from our school system. It is common to face challenges as a natural part of the growth our parish has experienced; but the willingness of everyone to work together is not so common.

Special thanks are extended to the West Baton Rouge Parish Council for the support they lend to me, and to my staff as we work together for the good of the people of West Baton Rouge Parish.

Best regards,
Riley L. Berthelot, Jr.
West Baton Rouge Parish President

Mosquito program gets honor

The WBR Mosquito Abatement Program has been honored by the Louisiana Mosquito Control Association (LMCA) for two innovative products created by George Bragg to maintain mosquito larvicide more effectively in culverts, and to better monitor mosquito populations.

The larvicide tablet cartridge Bragg created floats and is tied to the drain, so that it cannot sink in the mud or get washed away by heavy rains, thereby making the larvicide tablets last much longer. "The tablets are expensive and the cartridge dramatically reduces the number of tablets needed," Bragg said. The other product was a trap design to trap mosquitos at culvert drains to determine population levels. Both designs are now in use in West Baton Rouge.



In the photo above, Patrick Sutton, president of the LMCA, presents the Stephen Mayor Operational Achievement Award to George Bragg of the WBR Mosquito Abatement Program during its conference in New Orleans in December.



WEST BATON ROUGE ASSESSOR

Exemptions save property owners taxes

If you are looking for a way to avoid paying higher property taxes, West Baton Rouge Assessor Barney "Frog" Altazan has some suggestions. "There are state exemptions and tax freezes that our residents can take advantage of again this year to save them a few dollars," Altazan says.

Check the following to see if you qualify:

Disabled or 65 years or older property value freeze – The Louisiana Special Assessment Level program allows for residents who are disabled, disabled veterans with 50 percent disability or those 65 years old or older to have the assessed value of their homes frozen for tax purposes. This means their homes would not be subject to re-evaluation and the assessed value of their homes would remain the same no matter if property values increase. Property owners must live in the home, be disabled, be a disabled veteran, or be 65 years or older and have a combined adjusted gross income of \$71,549 or less in 2015.

Veterans with a service-connected 100 percent disability exemption – West Baton Rouge voters approved this additional exemption in 2011. It provides an additional \$75,000 exemption to property owned and occupied by veterans with a service-connected, 100 percent disability. It also extends to their surviving spouse. This is in addition to the \$75,000 homestead exemption, increasing the total exemption for these veterans to \$150,000.

10-year industrial tax exemption – Large companies that have met certain criteria required by the state may get a 10-year industrial tax exemption. These companies usually get this exemption in the first 10 years

they are located in a parish as an incentive to locate in Louisiana. After 10 years, the exemption rolls off and they pay existing industrial property tax rates.

Agriculture and timberland exemption – Property owners who have three or more acres of land that are actively used for farming, timberland or horticulture (such as having cattle, poultry, fruit or pecan orchards, etc.) can receive a use value exemption. A minimum of three acres must be actively used for agriculture, horticulture or timberland and it must produce at least \$2,000 a year in income. Property that meets the qualifications is assessed at a much lower value than residential or commercial property. Altazan says property is put into one of four agricultural/timberland classes, which determine the value per acre. For example, agricultural classes are: Class 1, \$34.79 per acre value; Class 2, \$29.19 per acre value; Class 3, \$21.52 per acre value; Class 4, \$18.62 per acre value.

This is a significant reduction from the normal residential and commercial land values. According to Altazan, timberland classes are valued a bit higher per acre than agricultural class values.

"We are always happy to assist any property owner who thinks he or she may be eligible for any of these exemptions," Altazan adds.

For more information about these exemptions, visit the West Baton Rouge Assessor's Office website at www.wbrassessor.org. Or, call the Assessor's Office at (225) 344-6777.



TOWN OF ADDIS

SAVE THE DATE

Town of Addis
100th Anniversary
Celebration
September 11 & 12

Band and night parade on Friday night!
Historical displays, bands, fireworks and more on Saturday!

The Anniversary Celebration is being chaired by Council members Rhonda Kelley and Tate Acosta. Help plan the fun! Call town hall at 225-687-4844 to join the committee.

New culvert program begins; to benefit residents and town

A unique culvert program that greatly cuts the cost of culverts to property owners, while also saving the town money on maintenance, has been established by the Town of Addis.

Under the program, the town and property owners half the cost of culverts, tees, grates and couplings to close in open ditches along roadways. Residents are responsible for the cost of catch basins and dirt, and the town crews will install the culverts at no charge to the property owners. "The town will determine the number of catch basins required, and the property owners will pick their dirt vendor," said Mayor David Toups.

The town adopted the program from the Town of Brusly, where it has been highly successful and popular. Mayor Toups said the town will accept applications for this year's program through March 31, and will use the lottery system if the number

of applications exceeds the town's budgeted funds for the program.

Applicants will be required to pay a 50% deposit of their estimated cost when the project is about to begin, and the installations will be done throughout the year as the town crew's work schedule permits.

The program provides significant savings to the town because it greatly reduces the maintenance costs of cutting and weeding ditches and strengthens the support for roadways. In addition, it also beautifies the town by reducing the number of ditches.

Once an application is received, the property is measured and the property owner is given an estimate of the total cost and the owner's share. If the property owner wants to participate a 50 percent deposit of the owner's share is required, with the other 50 percent paid after the work is completed.

Meetings:

Addis Mayor & Town Council - 1st Wednesday of each month - Town Hall
Addis Planning & Zoning - 3rd Tuesday of each month - Town Hall
Addis Historical Society - 2nd Tuesday of each month - Addis Museum

Civic League of Addis - 2nd Monday of each month - Town Hall
Fire Sub-district #1 - Last Tuesday of each month - Fire Station #3



TOWN OF BRUSLY

Police station provides security/technology features

Brusly police officers say they feel much safer and can work more efficiently and comfortably in the new Brusly Police Station, which was completed in November.

The new station has numerous features that the old town police station did not have. "This facility was built to be a police station," said Mayor Joey Normand. "The old station was a converted office that was not conducive for police work."

The new station includes a concrete suspect processing/holding area for those arrested, a reception area, a vehicle sally port that provides security for officers when bringing a suspect into the station, an interview room with video and audio capabilities, an evidence room, a workout room for officers (which was required by the town's health insurer), large kitchen for on-site meal preparation in emergency situations, such as hurricanes; and a conference room with audio and visual capabilities.

In addition, all doors have keypad entry and video surveillance is prevalent throughout the building. The conference room will also serve as the town's Emergency Operations Center because of its capabilities, and the building's wireless internet.

Officers also now have their own desk space

and computers in the squad room, where they can work and maintain their records more efficiently.

"The processing/holding area is a big improvement because it allows us to safely confine a suspect," said Police Chief Jonathan Lefeaux.

"With the old station we didn't have this area, so we had to transport suspects to the jail in Port Allen quickly for safety," Lefeaux said. "Now if traffic is backed up on La. Hwy. 1, we can keep the suspect in the holding area for an hour or two and not waste that time sitting in traffic."

"The new building has also been a real morale booster for the staff," he said.

Mayor Normand said the \$3.3 million project included construction of a records building and the addition of three bays on the town's maintenance



New Brusly Police Station

barn. The town obtained a state grant to fund 75 percent or about \$2.8 million of the construction cost.

"The town shouldn't need any other big construction projects for many years to come," said Mayor Normand. "Town Hall is only 14 years old and our maintenance facilities are in good shape." The old police station was demolished in January and the area will be used as a parking lot.

The building also has energy efficient features such as a rain screen facade, high efficiency AC/heating system, and insulated windows and glazing. It was designed by Holden Architects and build by Stuart Construction.

CITY OF PORT ALLEN

Road improvement projects to begin in Feb.

The City of Port Allen has contracted with RJ Daigle & Sons to do the construction work on Phase 2 of its five-year road improvement program, and work is expected to start some time in February.

Phase 2 includes Burbridge Street from Third Street to North Alexander Street, Oregon Street from Palm Street to North Alexander Street, Washington Street from Kentucky Street to Court Street, Elm Street from Roosevelt Street to Atchafalaya Street, Magnolia Street from Roosevelt Street to Atchafalaya Street,

Avenue B from South River Road to South Alexander Street, Avenue E from South River Road to South Alexander, and Avenue G from South River Road to South Alexander Street.

The project includes patching, milling and overlay of the streets, and will cost approximately \$222,700.

Phase one of the road improvement program included 6th Street, 7th Street, Palm Street, Harding Street, Avenue F and Avenue D, and was completed in the Spring of 2014.

Black History Parade set

A Black History Day Parade will be held on Saturday, January 31 beginning at 1 p.m.

The parade, sponsored by Save Our Sons, will begin on Louisiana Avenue, and will continue to North Alexander Street, to California Street, to North 14th Street, and will return to William & Lee Park.



PORT ALLEN HOSTS HOLIDAY DINNER FOR SENIORS...

The City of Port Allen hosted 130 senior citizens for a holiday dinner on December 11 at the Port Allen Community Center. The event was sponsored by the city and the One Port Allen Committee. "We wanted to say thank you to our senior citizens for all the volunteer work they do in Port Allen, and also continue our efforts to bring the community together," said Mayor Richard Lee. He and Council Member Gary Hubble were among the servers for the dinner.

Work on levee trail extension to begin soon

The city's beautiful and popular Old Ferry Landing park area is about to get better! The City of Port Allen and West Baton Rouge Parish Council have combined forces to add to the levee top trail.

Mayor Richard Lee said the additional trail will be blacktopped for an even surface and will be extended north to Rosedale Road. Parish crews will do the work. "The parish is planning the work now, and we expect it to start within a month, but it will depend on the Mississippi River water level," he said. "When the river reaches certain levels, no work is allowed on the levee." The city has allocated \$50,000 for the project.

The levee top trail is a valuable and sought-after recreational asset of the city, and is used by local residents daily for walks, bike riding and watching maritime activity on the river.



WEST BATON ROUGE TOURISM

Tourism official reflects on activities

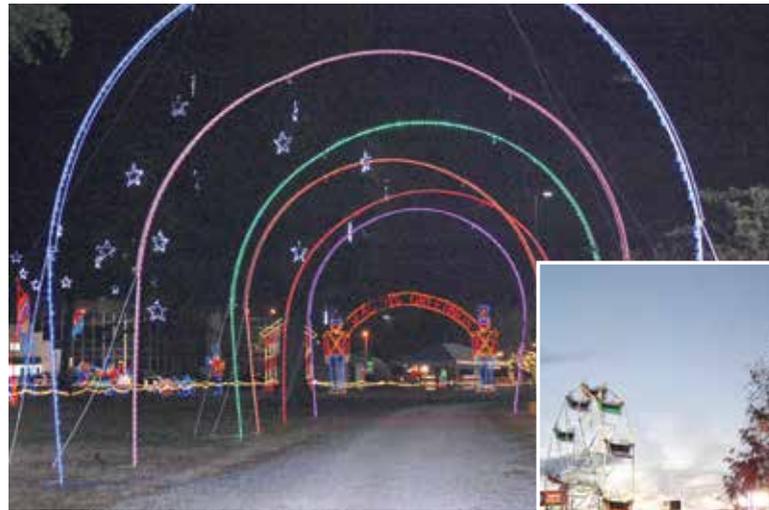
While she was packing up more than \$1 million in Christmas lights and decorations from Reflections of the Season, Director Sharon Stam of the West Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Bureau (WBRCVB) was already looking ahead to an event-packed 2015.

The sixth annual event proved to be the biggest and best yet, with the magnificent display of lights attracting travelers from around Louisiana and other states, Stam says.

"This was the most successful year we've had. Travelers could see the lights from the top of the Mississippi River Bridge and were stopping in to see what it was about," she points out. "We had visitors from Oklahoma, Georgia and Arkansas. People were comparing our displays to those in Natchitoches, and I consider that quite a compliment."

Stam attributes much of the event's success to its sponsors and volunteers, as well as word of mouth from those who have attended the holiday display and recommended it to friends and family.

"I'm pleased that everyone around the state is enjoying it," she said.



Part of the Reflections of the Season light display.

CENTER UPDATES: The Spring of 2015 will be a busy time for the CVB. Improvements and updates to the 15-year-old Tourist Information and Conference Center facility will be made, Stam said. The work includes a new outdoor digital sign, as well as interior and exterior maintenance, financed with a \$250,000 bond.

One recent addition to the Tourist Center is a display featuring Moby, a 760-pound alligator, the

largest ever caught in West Baton Rouge Parish. He was shot and killed by Jim White of Ventress in September 2013.

"Mr. White was looking for a good home for Moby and we agreed to give him a place here for five years," Stam says, adding it took 10 men to move the 13-foot, 4-inch Moby into his new quarters. Stam said the display has already attracted several tour buses, and she encourages visitors to come by and check out the record-breaking gator and watch a video that is part of the exhibit.



KITE FEST IS APRIL 10-12

Kite Fest Louisiane is set for April 10-12, which happens to fall during the Easter school holiday.

"Traditionally, the Friday is 'Student Day,' but this year we encourage families to come out

and experience the excitement," she said.

Stam is preparing for a busy year traveling to tourism shows, including those in Washington, D.C.; McAllen, Texas; Santa Clara, Calif.; and Memphis, Tenn. "We want to let tour operators know we are a great destination," she said.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Nominations for Pride of WBR honor being accepted now

What individual or organization has been a standout in our community in the past year? The Pride of West Baton Rouge Award honors individuals, organizations or groups whose work encourages the quality of life and development of WBR as an excellent place to live, work and do business. For a nomination form call 225-383-3140. The 2015 recipient will be honored at the Chamber's Annual Banquet on February 3.



WELCOME TO THE PARISH



MEI: Maintenance Enterprises
7535 Highway 1 S, Addis, 225-545-4269

Chamber membership meetings:

Wednesday, February 25

Speakers: Sens. Rick Ward & Troy Brown, Reps. Major Thibaut, Regina Barrow & Karen St. Germain and BRAC's SVP Governmental Affairs & COO Erin Monroe Wesley

Wednesday, March 25

Speaker: Associate Chief Medical Officer Ken Cole
Reservations required! 225-383-3140 or bonnie@wbrchamber.org

WBR Chamber's 2015 officers, board to be sworn in at Annual Banquet



Speaker
Roland Toups
CEO Turner Industries

Sponsor:
Business First Bank



Tuesday, February 3
Addis Community Center

Silent Auction and cocktail hour 6-7 pm., Banquet begins at 7 p.m.

The presenting sponsor for this event is Business First Bank.

Featured speaker: CEO and Board Chairman Roland M. Toups of Turner Industries.

For information on tables and tickets, contact the Chamber office at 225/383-3140 or bonnie@wbrchamber.org

2015 Executive Board



Chair Scott Gaudin
Investar Bank



Past Board Chair
Juan Carrillo
The Dow Chemical Company



Board Chair-Elect John Richard
Turner Industries



Board Member-at-large:
Julie Rose
West Baton Rouge Museum.



Treasurer Hampton Obier
The Island Country Club

New to the board this year will be: Mary Arrasmith, West Baton Rouge Parish School System; Glen Daigle, American Gateway Bank; Gary LaBauve, Neighbors Federal Credit Union; and Harry Shields, Entergy.



WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH SHERIFF

**THE CHRISTMAS CRUSADE FOR CHILDREN:
Bringing smiles to 220 children at Christmas**



Sheriff Mike Cazes and Christmas Crusade for Children Coordinator Mindy Rumfola are shown in front of some of the donated toys for the program.



Shown are some of the toys donated and purchased for the Christmas Crusade for Children.

Christmas was much brighter for 100 West Baton Rouge families, including 220 children, thanks to the annual Christmas Crusade for Children sponsored by Sheriff Mike Cazes, the West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office and generous local donors.

The program has been on-going for some 30 years, and this year's program received generous donations from Toys R Us, Wal-Mart, the Port Allen High Alumni Association, and the Frank H. Carruth Foundation, along with individual donations by many local residents.

"My kids will have Christmas thanks to this," said one local single mom who received bags of toys for each of her three children. "It's such a relief. I'm just trying to make ends meet, and didn't have the money."

The sign-up period for the program was December 1-12, and is limited to residents of West Baton Rouge. They are required to provide proof of income, and the age limit for gifts is 12 years. In completing the form for the program, the parent or guardian picks one toy from a list provided for each child.

"This year, thanks to an abundance of donations, we were able to provide three to four toys for each child," said Mindy Rumfola, coordinator of the program and an administrative assistant in the Criminal Investigation Division of the WBR Sheriff's Office. "We also received \$1,200 in cash and \$200 in gift cards to go buy the needed gifts," she said.



"We set up outside Wal-Mart on one Saturday in December and ask for donations, and the people are really generous," she said. "One girl spent her last \$10 to donate two toys. That's the Christmas spirit. Without this help, these kids might not have a Christmas."

Rumfola also credited the Port Allen High Alumni Association for providing volunteers to sort toys; and Joseph Daigle of Knights of Columbus Council 8878 for preparing jambalaya for the helpers during distribution day just before Christmas.

"Sheriff Cazes has been very supportive of this program every year even though it takes a lot of time away from our work," Rumfola said. "It's a labor of love."



Ranked 9th in the nation in total tonnage, there's a lot of "new" at the deepwater Port of Greater Baton Rouge that you need to know about: like **new investment** in infrastructure, **new land** available for development, and **new companies** locating at the port.

- Over \$10 million in improvements to the port's rail lines and infrastructure
- 300 acres of land available for development with access to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway
- Genesis Energy, L.P. will construct a new \$150 million crude oil, intermediates and refined products import/export terminal, expanding that company's commitment to providing efficient midstream supply and logistics services in the region
- \$30 million wood pellet storage and transfer operation by Baton Rouge Transit, LLC nearing completion
- New grain dock and landside export grain elevator by Louis Dreyfus Commodities are now operational
- \$3.5 million expansion by Westway Terminals, LLC expands the port's liquid bulk terminal
- Expanded growth and new projects will result in over 200 additional ship calls annually and increase the volume of barge traffic at the port docks

For the full story, just give us a call and ask, "What's new?"

Contact Greg Johnson, Director of Business Development, at 225.342.1660.

**Have you heard
the New?**



**PORT OF GREATER
BATON ROUGE**

2425 Ernest Wilson Drive • P.O. Box 380 • Port Allen, LA 70767-0380 • Phone: (225) 342-1660 • Fax: (225) 342-1666 www.portgbr.com

WEST BATON ROUGE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Officials unveil new vision, mission

In the spirit of a new year and new beginnings, the West Baton Rouge Parish School Board and administration are revealing a 5-year strategic plan and new mission.

"We wanted to start the new year on a positive note," said Superintendent Wes Watts. "Our Board is awesome. And (former superintendent) Mr. Corona did a great job. We aren't really changing anything, but we wanted to set a clear vision and wanted to repurpose our strategic plans."

The board and key administrators considered options at a retreat held at a local motel in November. The result was a clear vision for the future of West Baton Rouge school children.

They came up with five focus areas:

1. Academic
2. Personnel
3. Budget
4. Buildings and Facilities
5. Transportation

The next step is to meet in working committees to develop long term goals and an action plan for each of the focus areas. "We will do the work, but we want and need input from stakeholders," Watts notes. "I'm excited about the possibilities and what we can accomplish for the students in West Baton Rouge Parish."

Signs with the new goals will be placed at each of the parish's 10 schools and in other school properties. Watts hopes to meet with each principal to gain their support in working toward the goals.

The board retreat is just one of the steps taken by the new superintendent since assuming the position in July. In August, he launched initiatives with the slogan, "Making awesome happen." It was printed on nearly 700 t-shirts, in each school's colors, and presented to every employee.

Watts encouraged everyone to wear the t-shirts throughout



Mediator Warren Drake of the Louisiana Department of Education (left) leads the retreat held in November.

VISION To serve our community by inspiring academic excellence and building good character.

MISSION To prepare every student for success through high quality instruction and character building

CORE VALUES

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| Student Centered | Pride |
| Integrity | Safety |
| Moral Purpose | Diversity |
| Teamwork | Community Involvement |

the school year as they strive for "awesomeness." When awesome things occur around the district, Watts shares them in his weekly "411" e-mail message.

Watts believes everyone has a role to play in the school district's

success. "This is a new year and I want to ensure that we're not just operating day to day," he said. "We have a vision of where we want to be and we want this system to be a model for others."

District honors outstanding Students of the Year

Although the West Baton Rouge Parish School District values each and every student, three students are being recognized as outstanding Students of the Year - Jeanette Coco, Lukeville Upper Elementary School; Erin Stephens, Brusly Middle School; and Rhea Lee, Port Allen High School.

Associate Superintendent for Instruction Sharon Lair said three students are chosen annually from all of the parish's elementary, middle and high schools. "Each of these students was very impressive," Lair notes. "They gave very good interviews on difficult topics like Common Core."

Sponsored by the La. State Superintendent through the State Department of Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the program recognizes students who have demonstrated excellent academic achievement, leadership ability and citizenship.

Winners must be in the fifth, eighth and twelfth grades. Their principals submit their names to a Student Achievement Committee, which is comprised of teachers, an administrator and three community members representing business or civic organizations.

Each student must have a minimum 3.5 grade point average on a 4-point scale, and prepare an application portfolio of information. Within the portfolio, the students must highlight three or four issues that are important to them and that have had an influence on their lives. They are also interviewed.

The committee then selects the top three students from each grade category to move on to regional competition. Regional winners will be announced in the Spring and will be eligible to be named 2015 Louisiana Student of the Year in April.



JEANETTE COCO, 10, is the oldest daughter of Ashley and Greg Coco. She enjoys playing soccer, going to the movies, singing, dancing and hunting. She also is a member of a swim team and 4-H. "My biggest influences are my mom, dad and my teachers," she wrote. "My mom and dad both push me beyond my limits and encourage me outside of school."



ERIN STEPHENS: Fourteen-year-old Erin is the youngest child of Adam and Gisele Stephens. She attributes her uniqueness to her grandparents, including her grandmother's interest

in English and her grandfather's role as family historian. "Her (grandmother's) excellence in writing and interpretation of the English language was genetically descended to me," Erin noted.



RHEA LEE: The fourth child of Carolyn and Richard Lee II, 17-year-old Rhea will have earned 12 college credit hours when she graduates. She plans to attend Xavier University in New Orleans and study pharmacy. She is a cheerleader, volleyball player, Beta Club member and serves on student government. "To me, school is much more than passing tests and winning athletic events; it is about helping one another get through this journey called life," Rhea wrote.