

VISION WEST

West Baton Rouge Parish - Community, Growth, Possibilities

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

Calendar of Events

May 1 - Splash pads open

May 3 - Gaitway Trail Challenge at Multi-purpose Arena, Info: 225.766.1614

May 7 - Lecture on War 1861-1867, WBR Museum

May 9-July 12 - Neal Family Blues exhibit, WBR Museum

May 23 - William & Lee Pool opens

May 16 - Blues Legends event, Info: 225.445.0514

May 27 - Chamber member meeting, Info: 225.383.3140

June 6 - Southern Soul Blues Festival at Multi-purpose Arena

June 7 - Gospel Brunch at WBR Community Center, Info: 225.445.0514

June 24 - Chamber member meeting, Info: 225.383.3140

July 4 - 4th Fest, Old Ferry Landing in Port Allen

July 9 - Lecture on Mourning at end of Civil War, WBR Museum

July 18 - Katrina photos exhibit, WBR Museum



Students see dangers of drinking and driving

The entire student body of Brusly High School witnessed a student fatality and injuries to others at a staged scene on April 15 to show them some of the dangers of drinking or texting and driving.

The graphic staging of a head-on collision included a student who died after going through the front windshield, and three others with serious injuries. It was made more real with family members arriving at the scene and grieving; bloodied teens, windshields and cars; an ambulance, fire trucks and a hearse rushing to the scene; firefighters using the "jaws of life" to pry open one car; and emergency responders getting the "dead," injured and drunk teens out of the cars.

The mock crash was sponsored by WBR Healthy Community Coalition for alcohol



prevention awareness during prom & graduation season.

Director Toddie Millsted said the accident was staged to make an impact on students, and to make them think before they drink and drive. Students watching commented, "I thought it was real at first," "It was scary," and "It proves the point." Brusly High Principal Walt Lemoine noted, "This was a reminder to our

600 students of what can happen when you drink or text and drive."

La. State Police Officer Clay Reavis addressed the students after the staged accident, recounting a horrific accident that he worked involving a drunk driver, in which one young woman was killed and others injured. "The drunk driver didn't even remember the accident," he said. "You didn't experience the smells and sounds here today. And I can tell you, (continued on Page 2)

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.wbrcouncil.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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Sign-up underway for popular summer camps

Port Allen Community Center - June 2-4, June 9-11

Addis VFW Hall - June 16-18, June 23-25

Erwinville Community Center - July 7-9, July 14-16

Camps are from 8-3:30 p.m. Lunch and a snack are provided. The camps include fun activities, games, sports, arts and crafts, on-site shows, field trips and splash days!

Camps are open to kids age 5 to 12, and the fee is \$10 for each week. It is open to the first 100 registrants. Register for the summer camp at the West Baton Rouge Recreation Department office in the West Baton Rouge Community Center in Port Allen.



Splash pads open on May 1!

Hours: 8 a.m.-8 p.m. for children 12 and younger. Parental supervision and proper attire are required.

Williams and Lee Pool opens May 23

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 1 p.m.- 6 p.m.

Additional camp, swimming lessons to be offered at Williams and Lee Park

The West Baton Rouge Recreation Department will also offer a summer day camp and swimming classes at Williams and Lee Park in Port Allen. **These are in addition to its other annual summer camps offered in Addis, Erwinville and the Port Allen Community Center. Information on those camps is shown at left.**

SUMMER CAMP: The half-day summer camp at Williams and Lee Park is open to 30 kids per session, age 4 to 12. A variety of activities will be provided for the campers. The registration deadline is May 8, and the fee is \$10 per child. The fee includes lunch.

Summer camps are:

Session 1 - June 1-5 and June 8-12

Session 2 - June 15-19 and June 22-26

Session 3 - July 6-10 and July 13-17

In addition, the Leaders in Training program is open for kids age 13-15. Candidates will go through an interview process and four candidates per session will be accepted. The Leaders in Training campers will shadow counselors to learn and help with the daily routine of camp.

Register for the summer camp at the West Baton Rouge Recreation Department office in the West Baton Rouge Community Center in Port Allen.

SWIMMING LESSONS: The swimming lessons at Williams and Lee Pool will be taught to kids age 5 and up by the YMCA, under an agreement with the WBR Recreation Department. The fee is \$10 per child, and 15 children will be accepted for each session.

Swimming lesson sessions are:

Session 1 - June 2-5 and June 9-12

Session 2 - June 16-19 and June 22-25

Session 3 - July 7-10 and July 14-17

To register a child for the swimming lessons, call the Dow Westside YMCA at 225-687-1123 or e-mail Jessica Huckaby at jhuckaby@ymcabr.org.

Officials joining forces to arrange the new summer activities for youths include the West Baton Rouge Recreation Department, West Baton Rouge Council members Charlene Gordon and Edward Robertson, Port Allen Mayor Richard Lee, Port Allen Council members Brandon Brown and Ray Helen Lawrence, and West Baton Rouge School Board members Rose Roche and Leon Goudeau.

Students see dangers of drinking/driving

(continued from Page 1)

It is something you never get out of your mind."

Reavis warned the students, "Drinking affects your ability to think and make decisions. Be responsible and don't drink alcohol and get behind the wheel of a vehicle."

Agent Alfred with the La. Alcohol & Tobacco Control Office told students that they would be "out in full force" on prom night and during graduation season to make sure underage students were not drinking, and to watch for those who might drink and drive.

Lemoine said that parents of the students had been e-mailed

and called the morning of the accident staging to advise them that it would take place, and they should not be concerned that it was a real accident.

Millsted said 22 agencies and 47 individuals participated in the staged accident including the Louisiana State Police, West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office, Brusly Police Department, Brusly Fire Department, Acadian Ambulance, West Baton Rouge Coroner's Office, East Baton Rouge Emergency Medical Services, BRCC, Wilbert's Funeral Home, and La. Alcohol & Tobacco Control. Lacombe's Wrecker provided the two wrecked vehicles for the staging.

WBR Librarian Vandersteen gets state honor

Beth Vandersteen, West Baton Rouge Library Director, received the highest award given to a librarian by the Louisiana Library Association in March at its annual conference. She received the Essae M. Culver Award for professional service and achievements and lifetime accomplishments in the field of librarianship.

Vandersteen has served as president of the Louisiana Library Association, and in various offices. Under her direction, the WBR Library has automated bookkeeping, re-allocated staff to double the number serving the public, and added a network administrator to assist in technology advances at the library.

High water temporarily halts levee projects

A project to lengthen the walking trail on the levee in Port Allen and to begin a walking trail in Brusly have both been suspended due to high water levels on the Mississippi River, said Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot. The Port Allen project, a joint project with the City of Port Allen, will extend the levee walkway north of the Old Ferry Landing Park. In Brusly, the South End Levee Trailhead is being constructed. The projects will resume when the water levels of the river drop enough for the U.S. Corps of Engineers to allow work on the levees. Later this fall, the trail in Brusly will be extended 1.5 miles.

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

Massive parish GIS project to link data, operations among departments, others

A massive initiative to migrate parish departments from departmental geographic information system (GIS) programs to a coordinated and centralized program in which GIS data is shared and managed is well underway. The initiative includes numerous parish departments - Administration, IT, Homeland Security and 911, Utilities, Community Planning and Development, Finance, Mosquito Control and others.

The initiative will provide the parish with the most reliable and up-to-date data available, and allow parish employees to work more effectively. For example, parish road crews will have computer tablets with them out in the field which will track how much area was mowed, or allow them to post a work order for a canal or road with photos and GPS coordinates. Mosquito Control can post GPS coordinates of mosquito trap locations and the dates and locations of spraying. Emergency agencies can access not only specific locations, but also utility lines and other critical information.

In addition, the new comprehensive system will be available to other agencies, the fire district, WBR School Board, WBR Sheriff's Office, voter registration office and the public. The maps will also be useful to the public. Voters can easily access their home, voting precinct and districts from the maps, along with other info. The parish has contracted with Environmental Science Services, Inc. on the initiative, and the firm is still in the process of migrating data to the new program and web-based portal.

The multi-year project includes the following components: providing a cloud-based, centralized data management system, a GIS platform with a website that provides all users with access to maps and data on a 24-hour basis, structure on work flow management, facilitating the incorporation of data from software used by other agencies, and facilitating support, training and trouble-shooting of the new program.

"This will be a very effective tool for us to be efficient and effective in numerous departments," noted Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot. "We are taking advantage of today's technology to better coordinate services and operations."

WBR included in LDOTD traffic study, watches legislation that impacts finances

Another study by the La. Department of Transportation and Development is underway to improve traffic flow on the interstate from La. Hwy. 415 into Baton Rouge. Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot said he was notified of the study, which is designed to find ways to make the I-10 corridor safer, more efficient and more compatible with surrounding communities. For information on this study and to post comments, go to www.i10br.com.

Berthelot said parish officials are also closely monitoring the on-going Louisiana Legislative session and bills that will impact finances for parish and local government agencies. A proposal by the Jindal administration to re-vamp the inventory tax would have a \$9 million impact on West Baton Rouge agencies, and a \$3.1 million impact on parish government. He said he and other local officials are opposed to the proposal.

New parishwide fire district logo adopted



The West Baton Rouge Parish Fire District has adopted a new logo to reflect its parish-wide operation. The logo is shown at left.

The West Baton Rouge Council also approved the hiring of Kenny Hunts as the new parish Fire Chief after the resignation of former Chief Charles Stephens. Hunts was previously Assistant Fire Chief of the Brusly Fire Department. Hunts has also served as president of the 13,000 member Louisiana Firefighters Association.

He started his career as a volunteer firefighter in 1991, and became a full-time firefighter in 2002.



ROTARY DONATES TREES... The Port Allen Rotary Club has donated 100 satsuma trees to the parish as part of its edible landscaping program. The trees were planted by parish crews at the following locations: Port Allen Middle School, the Port Allen Community Center, the WBR Soccer Complex, Williams and Lee Park, Louis Mouch Multipurpose Complex, and the levee. The public will be free to pick and eat the satsumas from the trees as they grow. In the photo above, one of the trees is planted at the soccer complex.

WBR 911 center among first in state to meet requirements as Missing Kid Readiness member

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children recently recognized the West Baton Rouge Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and 911 call center officials for completing the necessary requirements to become a Missing Kids Readiness Project member.

The parish's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and 911 call center spent two years in training and now join a growing list of response agencies that have completed the required steps of Missing Kids Readiness. The project promotes best practices for responding to calls of missing, abducted and sexually exploited children.

In addition to adopting a policy addressing missing or abducted child calls, West Baton Rouge Parish officials had to complete online telecommunications training from the AMBER Alert Training and Assistance Program. The parish 911 operators began the training in 2012.

"It was the right thing to do," said Anthony Summers, assistant director of the WBR Office of Homeland Security. "If we have a child abducted in West Baton Rouge, we didn't want to have to tell the family we didn't know what to do." Summers said. West Baton Rouge Parish is the second 911 call center in the state to receive the recognition from NCMEC.

**Know what to do in a hurricane:
WBRLEPC.NET GETAGAMEPLAN.ORG**



WEST BATON ROUGE ASSESSOR

Office on cutting edge of technology

As some Assessor's offices enhance their digital presence, West Baton Rouge Parish can claim to be one of the front runners in technology, dating back to the 1960s when it was one of the first to offer aerial photography.

The trend has continued, with the office last year becoming the first in the state to provide dimensional pictometry on its website. With the assistance of Fenstermaker & Associates of Lafayette, a Geographic Information System (GIS) vendor for digital mapping, the office created a user-friendly, high performance mapping solution that integrated the new "pictometry" imagery service interface.

Pictometry is the name of a patented aerial image process that utilizes low-flying airplanes to capture multi-dimensional images of objects. It allows viewers to see property from the front, back and sides, just as actually being on site.

Shortly after he assumed office in 2001, Assessor Barney "Frog" Altazan and his staff began researching digital mapping. It was the first step of a journey into information sharing that allows the public the capability of easily accessing data via the website.

Altazan explains the website offers an array of information that includes assessment data, archived reports, qualified sales, reporting forms, millage rates, the top taxpayer, public notices and more.

"Overall, I think it's one of the better systems in the state as far as the

amount of information that can be obtained," he says. Apparently, his colleagues agree. Some have turned to him for guidance and suggestions as they seek to update their technology. "We've had a few offices model their systems after ours," Altazan admits modestly. "I guess imitation is the greatest form of flattery," as he is now fielding inquiries from other assessor's offices interested in implementing the pictometry technology.

Altazan points to statistics that show the website is increasingly becoming more popular each year. During 2014, his office reports 33,587 sessions of website usage, with 15,979 users and 91,757 page views. Those numbers rose from 29,064 sessions, 12,076 users and 77,634 page views in 2012; and 31,632 sessions, 13,087 users and 84,545 page views in 2013.

The website improvements also offer enhanced printing, which is simplified and allows users to print a map, capture an image and email it.

"I hope the website is a very usable tool, not only for parish residents but for land men, abstractors and appraisers needing information from West Baton Rouge Parish," Altazan notes.

He encourages the public to visit the website at www.wbrassessor.org. As always, the Assessor's office has an open-door policy and invites anyone with questions or concerns to contact the office at (225) 344-6777.



Assessor Barney "Frog" Altazan reviews the website's digital mapping capabilities.

TOWN OF ADDIS

Street improvement project to begin

The Town of Addis will start a \$218,000 street improvement program by early May, said Mayor David Toups. The project includes overlays to the following streets: Susan Jean, Younger, Berthelot, the front of Sugar Mill, and raising the front of Peter Messina and First Streets. Patch work will also be done on some other streets.

Toups said the Addis Town Council has agreed to do a street improvement project annually in order to maintain good streets. "We have put money in the budget for street improvements annually for many years, but some years we did not do any street projects. With the town growth, it is now important that we keep up with this annually."

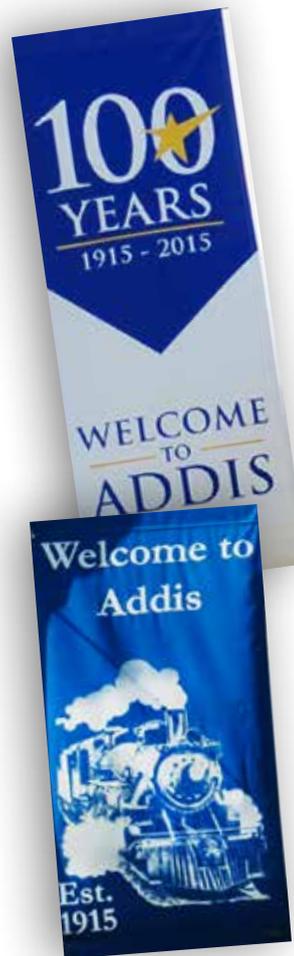
24 property owners apply for new culvert program

The new culvert program being offered by the Town of Addis has already attracted 24 property owners wanting culverts this year.

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," explained Mayor David Toups.

Applications for this year's program were accepted through March 31, and town crews will do the work throughout the year as time 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.



Activity builds for Centennial Celebration

The Town of Addis is seeking sponsors for its 100 year anniversary celebration, set for September 11 and 12. Residents may have noticed the town has already put centennial signs up on six light poles on La. Hwy. 1 (shown at left).

Sponsorships range from \$500 to \$10,000, and those interested in being a sponsor or volunteering with the event should call Addis Town Hall at 225.687.4844. Activities include bands, fireworks, and night time parade on September 11, and entertainment, historical displays, kids cove and other activities throughout the day on September 12.

HAVE A SEWER PROBLEM?

Call Addis Town Hall @ 225.687.4844

On Call Sewer Cell @ 225.776.0365

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


Bench warrants not ignored in Brusly

District Judge James Best has taken notice of the large number of bench warrants in the Eighteenth Judicial District, calling for a meeting among law enforcement agencies to develop a plan to arrest those with warrants. Best noted in his letter to officials that he had a report with 1,690 outstanding bench warrants in West Baton Rouge, which he estimated totals approximately \$500,000 with fines and court costs.

However, the Town of Brusly is among few that has a systematic program in place to address bench warrants. That program has been highly effective in reducing the number of bench warrants, and has resulted in almost \$2

million in revenue for the town in seven years, said Mayor Joey Normand.

“We had a huge backlog of bench warrants from traffic tickets,” he explained. “So we developed a plan to start locating those with bench warrants, and contracted with a private company to help us locate and collect the fines owed. Now seven years into this program, we have them down to a manageable state and the town benefits from the revenues they have produced.”

Bench warrants are issued when a person does not pay a citation issued by police, and does not show up on the designated court date to contest the ticket.

“It is very surprising the number

of people riding the roads with bench warrants, and driving with suspended licenses,” noted Normand, who is also judge of the Brusly Mayor’s Court.

“Our Police Department may issue up to 250 tickets a month, and most do not pay the ticket or show up for court. “The stack of bench warrants can build up quickly if you don’t aggressively go after the offenders,” he said. “We go after offenders.”

The bench warrants are handled by Traffic Clerk Carlisa Askins, who first sends the offenders a letter notifying them that if their ticket is not paid within a week after the court date, a bench warrant will be issued for their arrest. She follows that letter up with a phone call, explaining to the offenders that if they don’t pay the fine they will also pay significant additional costs.

If the fine is still not paid, the ticket is turned over to the Louisiana Department of Motor Vehicles, which means the driver is also now driving under a suspended license. The bench warrant is turned over to American Municipal Services (AMS), which aggressively seeks payment of not only the fine, but also the bench warrant and collection fees.

“A \$150 ticket becomes a \$313 expense when the bench warrant fee is added,” Askins said. “Another \$63 is added for the collection agency and suspended drivers pay \$100 to the Louisiana Department of Motor Vehicles for reinstatement of their license, so a \$150 ticket becomes a \$475 expense.” In addition, the Town of Brusly posts all those with bench warrants on the town website.

The town has received \$1.3 million in payments from bench warrants in the seven years between 2009 and 2015, plus an additional \$501,000 from paid bench warrant tickets.



Carlisa Askins, Traffic Clerk

CITY OF PORT ALLEN




Crews overlay a portion of Avenue C in Port Allen.

Street improvement project for 2015 is underway

Phase two of the City of Port Allen’s five-year street improvement project is underway, with overlaying of ten streets. Because project bids came in lower than expected, the city was able to add three additional streets to the project.

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 Street, Avenue G from South River Road to South Alexander Street, Melissa Drive, Mayland Avenue and Avenue C.

The project includes patching, milling and overlay of the streets. 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 2014.

City, bluesman bring music here

Acclaimed bluesman and West Baton Rouge native Kenny Neal is joining with the City of Port Allen on three events that will bring blues and gospel greats to the city.

BLUES LEGENDS BLACK TIE

EVENT: The first is the Louisiana Blues and Southern Soul Society Blues Legends black tie event on Saturday, May 16 at the West Baton Rouge Community Center.

Blues legends Buddy Guy, Percy Sledge, Lazy Lester and Henry Gray will be honored, along with local artists. The event will include a dinner, red carpet walk and videos on the honorees, and music provided by Kenny Neal and the Neal family. Tickets are \$50 in advance and \$65 at the door. A limited number of tickets are available.

SOUTHERN SOUL BLUES

FESTIVAL: The Southern Soul Blues Festival will be held on Saturday, June 6, from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. at the West Baton Rouge Multipurpose Arena, and will feature the music of Kenny Neal and the Neal Family, Chris LeBlanc, Vince Hutchinson, Lil Nate Zydeco, Tyree Neal, and other blues greats.

In addition to the main acts, the Discovery Stage will also be open for local artists who want to perform. Food and beverages will be available. Entry fee is \$20, and those attending are encouraged to bring their lawn chairs.

The festival will honor the late Rafal Neal, father of Kenny Neal and also a great musical talent, for his musical influence on many blues greats.

GOSPEL BRUNCH: The Gospel Brunch is set for Sunday, June 7, at the West Baton Rouge Community Center from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Headliner for the Gospel Brunch is Terrell Griffin, and numerous gospel choirs will perform. The event includes a full breakfast.

Tickets for all the events are available at Port Allen City Hall. The City of Port Allen will provide senior citizen discounts for both the festival and the Gospel Brunch by contacting Rose Roche at Port Allen City Hall – 225-445-0514.

Neal’s non-profit organization, the Louisiana Blues and Southern Soul Society Foundation, promotes the blues and blues musicians. Proceeds from the events will go toward the Blues in the Schools program.



WEST BATON ROUGE TOURISM

Tourism center gets facelift

After 15 years of tremendous use, the West Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Bureau is getting an updated look.

Financed with a \$250,000 bond, estimates and bids have been accepted for a variety of projects that include painting, new flooring, reconditioning of doors and trim, and replacing countertops.

Director Sharon Stam says the improvements began in December and include the implementation of a new sign. But since February, contractors have been busy. "It's been fast and furious. We've had to time everything between our events," she adds.

As the inside shapes up to better accommodate events like weddings and business meetings, she also hopes to update the exterior grounds to appeal to visitors and clients alike. "Many of our trees and shrubs are being replaced, and we want to improve upon our back patio," Stam explains. "We have some really exciting plans."

Once the major indoor renovations are complete, possibly by early fall, a



West Baton Rouge Convention and Visitors Bureau Director Sharon Stam looks over renovation underway at the tourism center. After 15 years, updates including fresh paint and new flooring, are being made.

reopening celebration will be held so that the public can see the new look.

Until then, there's plenty of activity to keep tourism officials busy. In May, sales missions are planned to Orlando and Miami to entice domestic and international tour and travel operators to the area. Following that trip, Stam plans to make a quick trip to Chicago, where Baton Rouge tourism officials are hosting a similar reception and have invited her to participate.

In addition to the promotional packets prepared for the tour and travel operators, a "Ride Guide" for area motorcyclists has been produced showing routes and attractions throughout south Louisiana.

Stam is also looking ahead to the Oldies but Goodies Fest, scheduled for Sept. 12-13. She recently booked two bands, Foret Tradition

and Rewind, and notes that registration is open for anyone who wants to take part in the barbecue cook-off.

For more information about upcoming events, visit the website at www.westbatonrouge.net or call the WBRCVB at (225) 344-2920.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



USA Rail Terminals expands in WBR

USA Rail Terminals, LLC announced plans on February 6 to open a West Baton Rouge rail facility and industrial park. It will be only facility in the Baton Rouge area receiving multiple unit trains, officials.

The facility will have the capability to manage the movement of single car loads, as well as complete unit train shipments. It will also have capacity to store more than 1,200 rail cars.

"We are very excited to become part of the Greater Baton Rouge business community," said Steve Roth, executive vice president of USA Rail Terminals, LLC. "Our decision to come to this area was based on our appreciation of the unique business environment and the people that live here. We look

forward to serving the surrounding industry and its transportation needs."

USA Rail Terminals will create 43 new direct jobs, representing over \$10 million in capital investment in the new facility.

"We are most pleased to welcome USA Rail Terminals to West Baton Rouge Parish," said Kathy Stuart, former West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce executive director. "This is a project we have been involved with from the very beginning, and an important win not just for our parish, but for the whole Region. Rail is an important economic development component and we are excited that a rail terminal will be an enhancement in our parish's tool kit."

Chamber gives special honors

Mary Delapasse, former director of Keep West Baton Rouge Beautiful, was honored with the Pride of West Baton Rouge Award by the Chamber at its annual banquet. She was honored for her tireless work to reduce litter in WBR.



Former Chamber Director Kathy Stuart with honorees Mary Delapasse and Gary LaBauve.

Chamber member Gary LaBauve of Neighbors Federal Credit Union was also honored as the Volunteer of the Year. He is on the Chamber Ambassador team, and assists at many Chamber functions.

UPCOMING CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED! (225) 383-3140 or bonnie@wbrchamber.org



MAY 27TH MEETING
BRAC
President & CEO Adam Knapp

Economic Development Update
Sponsored by: Republic Services



JUNE 24TH MEETING
La. Chemical Association
President Dan Borne

The stunning "economic" impact of La. Chemical Industry
Sponsored by: C.J. Brown Realtors – A Latter & Blum Co.





WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM

Neal Family Blues exhibit

The West Baton Rouge Museum will pay tribute to Raful Neal, an Erwinville native who is considered the godfather of Baton Rouge blues, and his talented family with the exhibition Neal Family Blues May 9 through July 27.

Raful and his wife, Shirley, had 10 kids together; all of them musically inclined. While other local musicians found fame in the North, Raful remained in the Baton Rouge area to raise his family and contribute to the local music scene. A member of the Blues Hall of Fame and Louisiana Music Hall of Fame, Neal played numerous juke joints and music halls across the region, including 14 years at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

Sons Kenny and Lil' Ray Neal have carried rural blues to the international stage, while grandsons Tyree, Chris, and BroBro carry the next generation into the hip-hop scene. The exhibit will feature a vintage jukebox playing Neal family albums, as well as instruments, photographs, and video on loan from the family.

Register now for Blast from Past camp

Registration is underway for West Baton Rouge Museum's **Blast from the Past Summer History Camp**. This year's camp participants will be singing the blues and stomping their feet to the theme, "Rockin' through the Ages!" The camp, designed for children ages 6-12, explores storytelling, music, art, culture, history and the science of sound through hands-on activities.

Two sessions, each lasting one week, will be offered **June 8 – 12** and **June 15 – 19**. Space is limited. Advanced, paid registration is required and reservations are taken on a first come, first paid basis. For more information or for an application form, please visit www.westbatonrougemuseum.com or call (225)336-2422 Ext. 15.



Coming events

April 18 - August 16: "When the Cannons Fell Silent: Sesquicentennial of the End of the Civil War"

May 9 - July 12: "Neal Family Blues:" An exhibit about the music legacy of Raful Neal and his family.

May 7: Luchtime Lecture with Dr. Paul Paskoff: "War Time Destruction and Post War Politics in the South, 1861-1867" Free

June Blast from the Past Summer History Camp. The theme is "Rockin' Through the Ages: Celebrating 20 Years of Blast from the Past." Two one-week sessions:

Session One: June 8 – 12

Session Two: June 15-19

July 9 Luchtime lecture noon: "We all wore black: Mourning Dress at the End of the Civil War," presented by Dr. Jenna Kuttruff, Free

July 14, 15, 16: Teachers Institute: Registration required by faxing registration form to Jeannie Luckett, 225-336-2448, visit www.westbatonrougemuseum.com for information.

July 18 through September 13: Katrina Photographs by Thomas Kneff: An exhibit marking the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

National award winning author to visit WBR Library

West Baton Rouge Parish Library will host National Book Award winner Kimberly Willis Holt on Sunday, May 3. The free program begins at 2 p.m., and the public is invited to attend and meet the author.

Holt's work includes books for toddlers through adults. Among numerous accolades, she was presented the National Book Award for Young People's Literature honoring *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*. Holt experienced an "international" childhood, since her father was a Navy Chief and they lived in locations around the

world. However, her family considered central Louisiana as "home," since both sets of her grandparents lived in Forest Hill and seven generations of her family spent their lives in that area. Some of her books use those roots as settings. *My Louisiana Sky*, *Mister and Me*, and her newest release *Dear Hank Williams* all show just how deep those roots go!

For more information, please call Beth Vandersteen at the Library, 225-342-7920.

Books by Kimberly Willis Holt

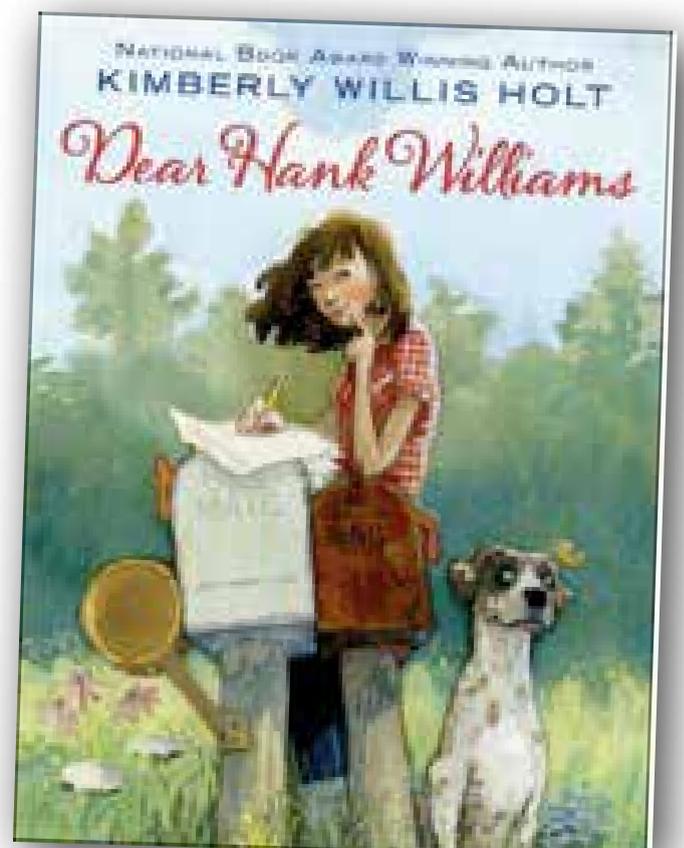
Picture Books: *Skinny Brown Dog*, *Waiting for Gregory*, *The Adventures of Granny Clearwater & Little Critter*, *Dinner with the Highbrows*

Piper Reed Series: *Piper Reed Navy Brat*, *Piper Reed Clubhouse Queen*, *Piper Reed Party Planner*, *Piper Reed Campfire Girl*, *Piper Reed Rodeo Star*, *Piper Reed Forever Friend*

Novels: *My Louisiana Sky*, *Mister and Me*, *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*, *Dancing in Cadillac Light*, *The Water Seeker*, *Part of Me*, *Keeper of the Night*, *Dear Hank Williams*



Kimberly Willis Holt



WEST BATON ROUGE SCHOOL SYSTEM

National group recognizes WBR schools for insight in adopting Common Core

The West Baton Rouge Parish School District has been recognized by the University of Washington Center for Education Leadership (CEL) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its leadership in adopting Common Core standards.

“Whether you agree with Common Core or not, the state decided we should implement it,” said Superintendent Wesley Watts. “I’ve always said this school district is a hidden gem and this is just one example of that. It was ahead of the game in preparing our students and teachers for what we were instructed to do.”

In November 2014, CEL and the Gates Foundation selected only three school districts in the nation to be highlighted for “tremendous work” in addressing the challenges of Common Core, according to a case study report issued by the partnership. In addition to West Baton Rouge, the other two school districts are Bayfield in Colorado and Boone County in Kentucky.

In creating the case study report, CEL representatives visited the district, spending time in classrooms and interviewing teachers,

instructional coaches, principals, learning specialists, administrators and the superintendent.

They credit school leadership with investing in professional development on a limited budget; creating collaborative environments; and investing in instructional coaches and teacher leaders.

Importantly, the CEL report notes that in 2010, the two year transition to Common Core was shortened to one year in Louisiana.

“Early on, West Baton Rouge Parish School District realized just how important it was to offer teachers professional learning opportunities, collaboration time and staffing to help them with understanding the standards...” the report concludes.

“District leaders have been resourceful about how they have invested in different supports. As a result, they have had more and more teachers see the Common Core State Standards as an added value to their own teaching practice, especially because of successful outcomes with higher levels of student performance.”



Brusly High brings home championships

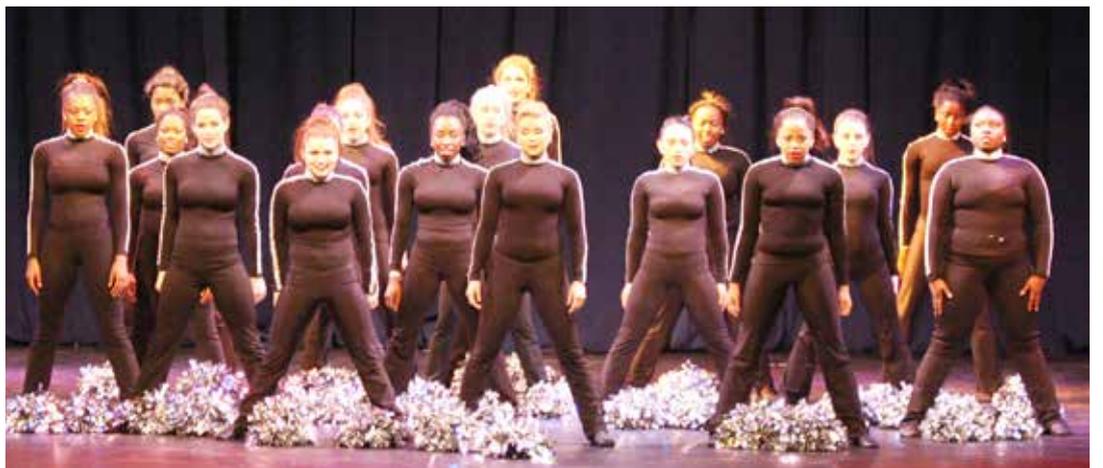
The Brusly High School Wrestling Team claimed its 11th Division III team title in the past 12 years in February at the Louisiana High School Athletic Association tournament. And, within days of that victory, the BHS Panthers Dance Team brought home a national championship from the American All-Star Dance and Drill Championship in Orlando, Fla.

The wrestling team captured the title at the Ponchartrain Center in Kenner, according to Coach Jimmy Bible. “It’s a great feeling. These kids worked hard and prepared all year,” he says. “They step up every year. Our program seems to be working.”

Wrestler Koby Mancuso was named All-Metro Most Valuable Player and nola.com Outstanding Wrestler of the Year. He is also a two-time state champion and two-time city champion. Koby is the son of Kirk and Toni Mancuso.

Dance Team Coach Renita Sherrard agrees with Bible that hard work is an important part of success. “It’s a lot of training, on weekends and after school,” she said. “But, I kept telling them that hard work pays off. Not only does perseverance pay off in championships, but it goes beyond the dance team and will benefit everything they will do later.”

The 17-member team’s performance in the Pom Division earned them the top ranking, beating out about a dozen other schools.



School board members get learning credits, Patton honored for service

Superintendent Wesley Watts recently presented WBR School Board members with certificates for completing the required number of Continuing Education units for 2014, as mandated by Louisiana law.

All board members are required to attend six hours of training annually,

and one hour of ethics governance. They must also complete one hour of Ethics Campaign Finance Governance during every 4-year term of office. Watts said all board members earned additional hours beyond the required hours.

Board members are Jason

Manola, Dr. Atley D. Walker Sr., Toby Sarradet, Craig Sarradet, Teri Bergeron, Leon Goudeau, Ronald “Blue” LeBlanc, Michael A. Maranto and G. Alden Chustz Jr.

Watts also presented Goudeau and retiring board member Thelma Patton with “Distinguished School

Board Member” certificates from the Louisiana Department of Education for their efforts in continuing education. Patton was also honored with a certificate of appreciation commemorating her years of service as a board member representing District VI.