

VISION WEST

West Baton Rouge Parish - Community, Growth, Possibilities

A quarterly publication for West Baton Rouge residents by your public agencies • APRIL, 2011

Calendar of Events

- April 2-July 3** Portraits in Gray exhibit at WBR Museum (see pg. 2)
- June 1** William and Lee Pool opens for summer swimming (see pg. 3)
- June 7-9, 14-16** Summer day camp at PA Community Center (see pg. 3)
- June 13-17** Summer history camp at WBR Museum
- June 18** Juneteenth Fest by City of Port Allen
- June 21-23, 28-30** Summer day camp at Addis Community Center (see pg. 3)
- July 23-Sept. 18** Cathartic Art: Remembering 9-11 exhibit at WBR Museum
- July 1-Oct. 16** Morley, the Vanished Lumber Town exhibit at WBR Museum
- July 4** Annual 4th Fest at the Port Allen Ferry Landing Park (see pg. 3)
- July 12-14, 19-21** Summer day camp at Erwinville Community Center (see pg. 3)



Shown at the ground-breaking ceremony are, from left, B.J. Simpson, Tullier Services; Billy Tullier, Tullier Services; Phillip Bourgoyne, WBRP Director of Finance; Daryl Babin, WBRP Director of Utilities; Kevin Durbin, WBRP Director of Public Works; Daniele Davis, Cecil D. Gassiott, LLC; Jonathan McFarland, DEQ CWSRF staff; Vladimir Alexander Appeaning, Deputy Secretary DEQ; Scott Templet, DEQ CWSRF staff; Riley I. Berthelot, Jr., WBR Parish President; Gary Spillman, WBRP Council Chairman; Bijan Sharifkahni, DEQ Administrator; Kevin Gravois and Bianca Carambat, Professional Engineering Consultants.

Ground-breaking held for \$2 million Westport sewer project

West Baton Rouge Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot and the Parish Council held ground-breaking ceremonies on April 12 for a \$2 million sewer improvement project in the Westport area.

The sewer collection system rehabilitation and Westport wastewater treatment plant improvements were made possible through a .95 percent loan obtained from the Louisiana Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

The project includes the area of Commercial Drive from Hwy. 415 east to the railroad tracks, South Westport Drive and eastward for approximately two miles, and part of the I-10 frontage road. The rehabilitation of the Westport area 300,000 gallon treatment facility involves replacing outdated equipment and improving the quality of the effluent discharged into local waterways.

The project is expected to start in May and will take approximately 150 days to complete.

"This rehabilitation should add approximately 20 years of service to a sewer collection system that has exceeded its 30-year life expectancy," said Parish President Berthelot. "Not only will it help with DEQ compliance, but also ensure the viability of the existing capacity for future residential and commercial needs."

Vladimir Alexander Appeaning, Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, said, "Investments into wastewater infrastructure improvements are critical to both environmental protection and economic development. These improve-

ments will not only enhance the quality of life for the residents, but can also promote job creation through the recruitment of new businesses, and retention and expansion of existing businesses. Finally, wastewater infrastructure improvements are essential to growing and expanding residential developments."



GREAT AMERICAN CLEANUP RAMPS UP HERE... Keep West Baton Rouge Beautiful (KWBRB) held a variety of activities in conjunction with the Great American Cleanup program. Shown above is a scene from Household Hazardous Materials Day, which was sponsored by The Dow Chemical Company. Among the items collected were 941 lbs. of batteries, 200 gallons of oil, 42 tires, 678 lbs. of pesticides/herbicides, 3,200 lbs. of paint, 1,880 lbs. of TVs and electrical devices, 330 lbs. of propane cylinders, and other household chemicals. Other activities included giving away 1,100 tree seedlings, and a litter pick-up by area residents and organizations on April 16 in the areas of La. Hwy. 190 and Hwy. 415, Addis and beautifying the Erwinville Community Center park. In addition, 600 Mormons are converging here on April 30 to do a variety of projects to beautify Port Allen Elementary, Port Allen Middle School, Cohn Elementary, and William and Lee Pool House, with KWBRB coordinating those activities.

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.wbrparish.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 6:30 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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WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

“Open libraries – open MINDS!”

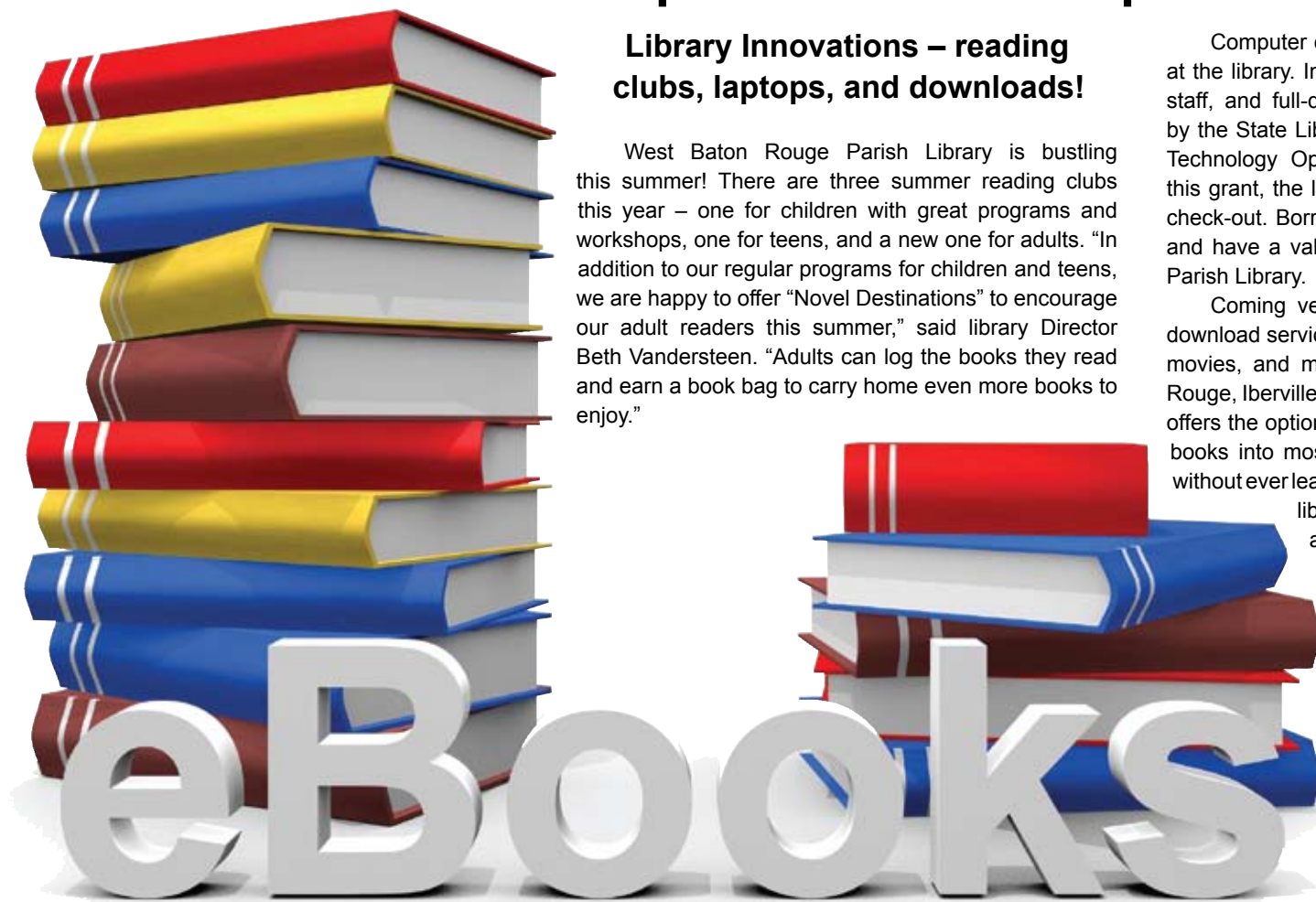
Library Innovations – reading clubs, laptops, and downloads!

West Baton Rouge Parish Library is bustling this summer! There are three summer reading clubs this year – one for children with great programs and workshops, one for teens, and a new one for adults. “In addition to our regular programs for children and teens, we are happy to offer “Novel Destinations” to encourage our adult readers this summer,” said library Director Beth Vandersteen. “Adults can log the books they read and earn a book bag to carry home even more books to enjoy.”

Computer classes for adults continue to be offered at the library. Introductory classes are taught by library staff, and full-day classes are provided at the library by the State Library of Louisiana through a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant. As part of this grant, the library also has ten laptops available for check-out. Borrowers must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid library card from West Baton Rouge Parish Library.

Coming very soon to the library is OverDrive, a download service that will provide e-books, audiobooks, movies, and music for library patrons in West Baton Rouge, Iberville, and Point Coupee Parishes. “OverDrive offers the option for patrons to check out and download books into most reading devices through our website without ever leaving home,” Vandersteen said. “While the library’s mission of information, education, and recreation service remains the same, how we deliver that service is changing at warp speed. These are exciting times for libraries!”

More information about library services can be found on the Internet at www.wbr.lib.la.us or by visiting or calling West Baton Rouge Parish Library.



WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM

Civil War exhibit highlights WBR Museum offerings

Schedule of events:

April 2-July 3: **Portraits in Gray:** (see related article)

May 14, 10am - noon: **What’s Your Story?** A family program to complement the exhibit *Portraits in Gray*. Enjoy easy creative writing and art projects inspired by Civil War photographs and demonstrations by tin type photographer, Bruce Schultz. Registration required, Free.

May 20, noon: **Lunch Time Lecture and Book Signing:** Historian Dr. Don Frazier, author of *Fire in the Cane Field: The Federal Invasion of Louisiana and Texas January 1861—January 1863*, will talk about the stirring history of U.S. Civil War battle scenes in south Louisiana. Free.

June 3: **Book Signing, Journey for Justice: The A.P. Tureaud Story:** Co-authors Dr. Rachel Emanuel and A. P. Tureaud, Jr. will discuss the life and accomplishment of Louisiana civil rights champion A. P. Tureaud in their new book (LSU Press). Free.

June 13-17 Session One and June 20-24 Session Two: **Blast from the Past Summer History Camp.** Campers will be

immersed into the time of the U.S. Civil War, 1861-1865 through hands-on activities, crafts, cooking, music, games, projects, historical re-enactments, and more. Registration and tuition required; reduced tuition for WBRP residents.

July 25: **Christmas in July Card Party,** a fundraiser for the West Baton Rouge Historical Association.

July 23-September 18: **Cathartic Art: Remembering 9/11:** The public is invited to submit original art works inspired by the events of September 11, 2001. The tenth anniversary of the tragic event in American history will be marked by the juried display of art works. Applications to submit art work can be found at www.westbatonrougemuseum.com and are due May 3.

July 1-October 16: **Morley, the Vanished Lumber Town:** The display features artifacts discovered in an area just west of Brusly that once thrived as West Baton Rouge Parish’s premier lumber town of Morley, established from 1907 to 1927.

Portraits in gray: A civil war photography exhibit featuring the collection of David Wynn Vaughn

This exhibit, presented by the *Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History, of Kennesaw, Georgia*, features photographs of Civil War soldiers from a rare collection amassed by David Wynn Vaughan of Atlanta, Georgia. Stories of local Louisiana militia groups and soldiers are featured, as well as battlefield artifacts and weaponry from the West Baton Rouge Museum’s collection and other local Louisiana private collections.



Private collector David Wynn Vaughan of Atlanta, Ga., has arguably the largest collection of Civil War Confederate images in the nation. “The entire collection is exceptionally rare and gives us insight into the human face of the American Civil War, as well as the importance of the photography of

the period,” said Mike Bearrow, curator from the Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History.

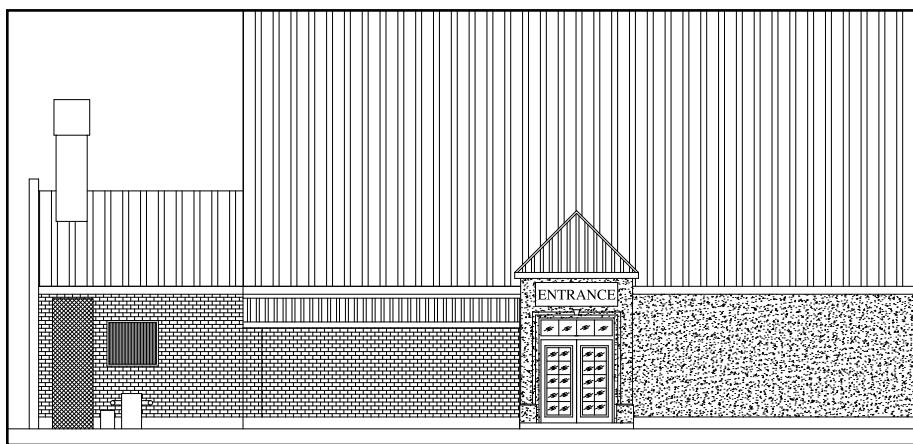
Also on exhibit, is a statue “maquette” of Henry Watkins Allen, sculpted by famed artist Angela Gregory. She used this model to show to the committee planning for the Allen statue. That statue is on display in front of the West Baton Rouge Courthouse. The exhibit will run through July 2.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION:

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



Major renovation set for Port Allen Community Center

The Port Allen Community Center is getting a \$450,000 facelift that will eliminate use of the facility between July and October 31. The work is being funded through the West Baton Rouge Parish Parks and Recreation Department tax proceeds. The project includes a new side entrance to the facility, addition of a lift door at the back, removing the bleachers and dressing out the walls with wood wainscoting similar to the other community centers in the parish, replacing the flooring and lighting, and repainting the interior. The existing wood floor at the center is too thin to be sanded down again so it must be replaced. Shown is a rendering provided by architect Dean Hotard of the new side entrance to the facility.



Parish plans activities for youths

SUMMMER FUN

Day Camps:

The parish is once again holding summer day camps for children, with plenty of field trips and activities at the great price of only \$10 per week. The camps are open to West Baton Rouge residents age 5 to 12. Camp hours are 8:30 until 3:30, and meals are provided.

Dates and locations:

Port Allen area camp at Port Allen Community Center – June 7-9, and June 14-16

Addis area camp at Addis Community Center – June 21-23, and June 28-30

Erwinville area camp at Erwinville Community Center – July 12-14, and July 19-21

Activities:

Field trips include the State Capitol, the La. State Museum, zoo, and movie. A variety of activities and shows, presented in conjunction with the West Baton Rouge Library, are also planned at the camp locations.

For more information, call the Parks and Recreation Office at 336-2423. To register a child for a camp, go to the Parks and Recreation Office located at the Port Allen Community Center during office hours – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Friday.

Swimming:

The popular William & Lee Pool will be open for swimming on June 1. The Parks and Recreation Department has again partnered with the YMCA to provide lifeguards and supervision at the pool. “The YMCA will provide all personnel and programs at the pool,” noted Anatole Vincent, recreation director.

The pool will be open to the public six days a week – from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Friday, four hours on Saturday. Private groups can reserve the facility for Sundays by calling the Parks and Recreation Department office at 336-2423.

PARISH IMPROVEMENTS: Roads, lighting projects ramp up

ROADS: The parish’s approximately \$1 million road improvement project is expected to begin by the fall. It includes the following road overlays and repairs: Reverend Manual, Freeman Lane, Parker Lane, Red Hat Road, Randal Gay Street, Genre Road, Smithfield Road, Commercial Drive and South Westport.

“We allocate \$1 million in the budget annually for road improvements, and the roads are selected based on a priority list,” explained Jason Manola, Executive Assistant.

“We had engineers do an assessment of the condition of all roads in the parish and the Parish Council worked with the engineers in developing a priority list based on the condition and use of the roads,” he explained.

“The design work on the project is underway, we expect to go out for bids in the summer, and the work will begin by the fall,” he said.

ENERGY SAVINGS: The parish has received a \$154,000 grant to install energy efficient lighting fixtures and lighting and air conditioning systems at the governmental building and lighting at the Port Allen Community Center.

The parish received the grant from the American Recovery Reinvestment Act federal grant program, which requires that grants be used for energy efficiency and conservation projects, and also requires that all parts be American made.

Chustz Electric of Port Allen was contracted to install the new systems, and work is expected to begin in May.

Local residents use free tax service

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site in West Baton Rouge handled some 60 returns for parish residents this tax season – doubling the number of returns it handled over last year.

The West Baton Rouge Parish Library and WBR Council teamed up to provide help to those who were eligible by providing free tax return preparation by certified volunteers. To be eligible, residents had to be low to moderate-income, disabled, or a senior adult with an income of less than \$50,000.

“We helped mostly elderly residents, and some young families,” noted Jason Manola, one of the volunteers.

Annual 4th Fest

Monday, July 4
Port Allen Ferry Landing Park
4:30 p.m. til 10 p.m.

Music provided by
Foret Tradition and Wayne Toups

Food • drinks • children’s entertainment
magic show • space walk • face painting
Fireworks at 9 p.m.

Come enjoy the celebration
and bring lawn chairs!



CITY OF PORT ALLEN

Street work part of \$2 million sewer improvement project

Construction crews are tearing up pieces of roads across Port Allen trying to reach sewer and drainage lines in need of upgrades. The work started in late March and is part of a nearly \$2 million project to increase the efficiency of the sewer and drainage system in the city.

Joe Deloch, superintendent of public works, says the system is working harder to do its job because of recent heavy rains and the rise of the river level. "It is taking three to four days for the water intake to get below a million gallons. It's a heavy load and we need to make sure the system is prepared to handle it," Deloch said. The water occasionally backs up and some lines get plugged, making it harder to treat the water and push it out at a rate that keeps it at a reasonable capacity. According to Deloch, the system is rated to treat a million gallons of water per day.

Mayor Derek Lewis says the improvements are necessary for a system that is between 55-60 years old. The construction will be completed in two phases. The first is repairs and upgrades to the collection system, which is currently underway and requires busting through roads to get to sewer lines.

The next phase includes improvements to the plant itself. "We have put money aside in the budget every year to make sure funds are available to get this work done," Lewis said. Initially the plan was to scrap the old system and build a brand new facility. However, the cost for a new sewer plant is \$7 to \$9 million. That option would mean some of the cost burden would be passed on to residents, equaling approximately a \$15 to \$20 increase in monthly bills.



Road work like the construction on North Jefferson Avenue is part of the construction to upgrade the sewer collection system in Port Allen. Crews are lifting the road to reach the lines, which bring waste water to the sewage facility. There are 59 points on local roads impacted by the work.

"The costs of the project were beyond what the city could afford without passing on some of the cost to residents. This is not the time to ask people to pay more for services, and we are not going to do that," Lewis said. After a review of the current facility, it was determined that upgrades and improvements would increase the efficiency of the existing facility and the council approved the refurbishing project.

Deloch says the work to improve the sewage and drainage collection system is what is causing the road delays. The crews have to dismantle the road to access the pipes that run under the streets and highways. "It is an inconvenience for drivers, but this is necessary," Lewis adds. The work is expected to impact roads at 59 points across the city and is estimated to be complete in 8-10 weeks.

TOWN OF ADDIS

Addis monitors home businesses to maintain residential area integrity

The increase in home-based businesses/occupations in Addis is prompting the Addis Planning Commission to make sure an ordinance governing new start-ups is observed. Some residents may not be aware that certain home businesses are required to register with the town.

Assistant Clerk Dana Strauss said the growth of new residents in Addis has increased the number of new home businesses by about 30%. She adds the registration is designed to protect the interest of the business owner's neighbors and insure that all businesses meet their tax obligation to the parish and state. "The ordinance is not about keeping tabs on people. Our goal is to make sure that residential neighborhoods are not impacted by business activities, and to maintain the integrity of residential areas," she said.

Strauss says if an application for home business occupation is rejected by the Planning Commission it is usually due to the potential for the business to alter the neighborhood by increasing traffic in the area or unattractive changes to the residence.

The Town Council revised the home occupation/business ordinances in 2005 after residents began complaining that certain business activities were causing a nuisance in their neighborhoods. Some of the restrictions on home occupations include: the business



can not be more than 25% of the floor space of the residence; no more than two family members can work for the home occupation; the business must not cause drastic changes to the character or appearance of the home;

there must be no substantial stock or inventory and no outdoor storage of mechanical, electrical or other equipment. There is a fee to register the home occupation. Strauss says every business begins at a flat rate and the fee can increase based on the size of the business.

A few residents have taken issue with the ordinance and refuse to register. Strauss says most of them expressed concern about the need for town officials to know what they are doing at their desk. Strauss says it is about equality. "We want to treat everyone the same and to ask some people to register and not others would appear unfair," she explained. Strauss plans to conduct research to find additional ways to locate unregistered home occupations in the area. She says the commission knows of several that continue to operate without a permit and that information was obtained mainly through word of mouth. "This is a small town and our goal is to maintain those qualities," she added.

The registration process in Addis for home occupations is not uncommon. According to SCORE, an advocacy group for small businesses, many municipalities both large and small require some type of permit to operate a small business. The need for a permit often varies depending on the type of business operation.

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
WBR Water District #1 - 1st Thursday of each month - Town Hall
Fire Sub-district #1 - Last Tuesday of each month - Fire Station #3



WEST BATON ROUGE SCHOOL SYSTEM

Two WBR schools look to 'TAP' initiative to increase academic gains

West Baton Rouge Parish has a relentless goal of improving the academic progress at all of its schools, even the better performing campuses. But the most intense focus is being placed on schools that have a population of students with known barriers to academic success. Superintendent David Corona recently announced that two schools in the district have volunteered to implement a national education model called the TAP initiative or The System for Teacher and Academic Achievement. The program begins next school year, and Corona points out that each school chose whether to change to this model. He believes that is a key component toward potential success. "The bottom line is that in TAP schools, where it was wanted, it worked and the schools showed tremendous growth," Corona stressed.



Michelle Kaufmann

Port Allen Elementary, led by Principal Michelle Kaufmann, and Port Allen Middle School, under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Szymanski, are leading the charge in the implementation of this aggressive and innovative model. District administrators presented the TAP opportunity to 7 of the 10 schools in the parish. The school leaders and staff reviewed the model and decided internally if it was a good fit. "It was imperative to me that we not start this initiative in any school unless there was total buy-in," said Superintendent Corona. There are some controversial elements to the TAP initiative. One of the biggest is the performance-based compensation element for teachers. The entire staff is eligible for stipends of up

What is TAP?

The System for Teacher and Student Advancement

1. Multiple career paths for teachers
2. Ongoing applied professional growth
3. Institutionally focused accountability
4. Performance based compensation

to \$10,000 if the schools overall performance increases. Teachers can receive extra pay if their students show gains. Kaufmann sees this part of the model as a plus for her staff. "The State is making the change to value-added evaluations soon, so we will be

prepared for that when it happens," she said.



Dr. Jonathan Szymanski

Dr. Szymanski says the elements in the TAP model were already imbedded in the culture of his faculty at Port Allen Middle in some form. "This seemed like the next logical step to take our instruction where it needs to go," he said. "We have many of these structures in place with our teachers meeting consistently reviewing information and helping one another." Master and mentor teachers provide a significant layer

of support to classroom teachers in this program. They are the backbone of TAP. Most of their time is spent reviewing student data and identifying problems. They work closely with teachers to adjust the problems or find best practices to share with them. "Our teachers will be observed four times a year and one of the observations is unannounced. In addition, the position of master and mentor teacher is not guaranteed. They are re-hired each year based on performance," Szymanski added. Master and mentor teachers help the faculty use the data on their students to tweak their teaching approach. Kaufmann says their role is critical and a necessary part of the process. "No more hiding out in classrooms. It is all out in the open and the staff is there to assist any teacher who is making little or no progress."

West Baton Rouge Parish is not alone in the decision to test out this national model. Thirteen other school districts in the state are also participating. Kaufmann and Szymanski, along with members of their staff, toured several TAP schools in the state. "I noticed at the school in St. Bernard there was no front. The meetings among staff were routinized. They got down to business and the intensity was very real." Both principals say they are excited about what lies ahead next school year as they put the elements of the initiative in place.



Students get instruction at Port Allen Middle School

WBR teachers provide input on new teacher readiness assessment

It was not long ago that a group of West Baton Rouge Parish teachers were judged on their preparedness to enter the classroom as first time teachers. Recently this select group was chosen from thousands of teachers nationwide to give their input of what today's new teachers must know before getting a classroom of their own.

The Princeton Review administers the Principals of Learning and Teaching Exam. They invited five teachers from West Baton Rouge Parish to participate on several committees to update the new teacher exam. Specifically, the testers wanted input from these teachers about their day-to-day experiences in the classroom. The invited teachers included Susan Harrington, an alternative education teacher at Brusly Middle; Kacy Hobbins, a pre-kindergarten teacher at Chamberlin Elementary; Althea Morgan, a teacher at Port Allen High; and Garrett Morris and Liquesha Williams, both teachers at Port Allen Middle School.

The invitation to participate on the exam committee included accommodations in Princeton, New Jersey at the testing headquarters. "When I first saw the email, I had to read it a couple of times. I thought it was a mass email and then I looked at it closely and saw that it was meant for me specifically," Morris said.

The teachers all agreed the experience was eye opening, particularly hearing the different practices used to teach students from state to state. "There are so many cultural differences. I found out we do things here in Louisiana that many others states do not do," Hobbins explained.

Williams said the experience was a bit like a refresher of her education courses in college. "We were discussing theories and I realized that many of the ideas that we discussed are things I am applying in the classroom. It was many of the same terms I learned in college," she said. Harrington says she found the discussions among

educators very interesting. "The group dynamic was electric. The debate over education issues was intense. While we all had different ideas and ways of expressing them, we eventually came to the same conclusion," she said.



Pictured from left: Princeton teaching exam committee members and local teachers Susan Harrington, Kacy Hobbins, Liquesha Williams and Garrett Morris. Not pictured Althea Morgan.



WEST BATON ROUGE CLERK OF COURT

WBR Clerk of Court launches online subscription service for records

The West Baton Rouge Parish Clerk of Court's Office is updating its operations by putting certain public records online. Parish Clerk of Court Mark Graffeo said the decision to go wireless was made primarily to assist those who search records frequently or have to travel long distances to retrieve the information.

It now requires only a credit card and an Internet connection to access thousands of documents in the West Baton Rouge Parish Clerk's office. The online system is subscription based and contains images of documents spanning 30 years. The web accessible documents include items such as mortgages, conveyances, oath of office information, charters and marriages. Clerk Graffeo said the new service is definitely a trend for clerks across the state and nationwide. "This is new for us, but providing this type of access to public records is becoming more common," he said. Over the last seven years, the Clerk's Office staff has spent hundreds of hours imaging documents in preparation for the online service.

The information that is now online is all public record, Graffeo stressed. He said his office went through great expense to black out all private information, including social security

and tax identification numbers and any other private information.

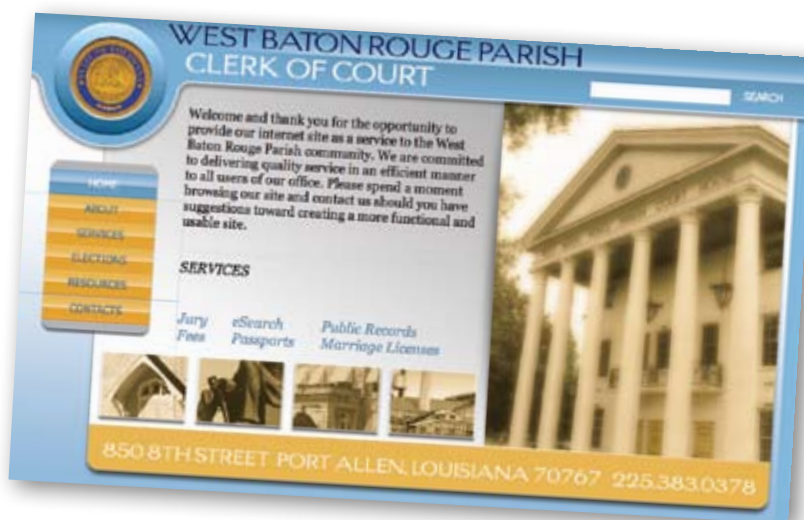
"There is certain information that relates to sale of property, mortgages, and marriages that are open to the public. But we have gone through great effort to eliminate the information that is not part of the public scope. We assure residents that our goal is to maintain their personal privacy," he said.

The online system is not something Graffeo expects members of the general public to find extremely necessary for their needs in the Clerk's Office. He says it is going to be a valuable tool for title companies, attorneys and researchers who often travel long distances to come to the office and retrieve the information. "We have some people who have to travel from Lafayette 3-4 times a week to look up information. For a small subscription fee, they can stay in their office and search online. This saves time and, of course, fuel costs," he added.

The subscription is \$50 a month. The charge also includes the cost to make copies.

The Clerk's Office is not supported by tax money. Graffeo says the additional revenue will help to maintain operations and possibly allow the office to hire additional staff.

There are not expectations for thousands



of users immediately, but Graffeo says he is optimistic that once a few repeat users get acquainted with the new system, the word of mouth will bring more people to the site. "I'll be happy if we get about 50 users in the first month, but I'm not expecting that many. The software company and others tell me it will be many more than that, which would be great," Graffeo said. The software for the new system is from Ohio-based Cott Software System. Graffeo says about 15-20 clerks offices in the state currently use the same system.

The West Baton Rouge Parish Clerk of Court has set up an online system which allows users to search and retrieve records online. The cost for a subscription is \$50. The system went online in April.

Sometimes actions speak louder than words...



The Dow Chemical Company has long been a recognized leader in community involvement. We've stepped up to the plate again – donating \$1 million to the construction of the Westside Technical College in Plaquemine. This is the largest donation ever made to the Louisiana Community and Technical College System Foundation and the largest donation ever made by a company in Iberville Parish. This much needed facility will provide local young people with the training and education for a bright and successful future. That's enriching the Human Element.



Amerchol, ANGUS, Grand Bayou Operations, Louisiana Operations, St. Charles Operations, Weeks Island





WEST BATON ROUGE TOURISM

Kite Fest Louisiane' 2011 most successful in West Baton Rouge history

Thousands of people gathered in Port Allen April 1-3, all looking up to the sky during Kite Fest Louisiane'. The annual event is one of the largest festivals in the area. The West Baton Rouge Convention and Visitor's Bureau organizes the festival, which is favorite among children and adults.

Sharon Stam, the visitor's bureau executive director says this year was the most successful since the festival began in 2004. "We like to think of it as we are doing our job. The different advertising methods we used to promote the event really helped to bring in our largest crowds ever," Stam said. This year the staff included social media advertising on Facebook and Stam says she did several interviews about the event on radio, including Radio Disney.

More than 2,000 students from across the region enjoyed kite flying and other fun activities on the first day of the festival at the Port Allen Soccer Complex on Student Day. The crowds, estimated at over 13,000, took advantage of the perfect spring weather for music, kite making workshops, kite performances, and more during the weekend. Stam says many of this year's attendees had been to the festival previously. "This event is growing every year and it is clear that people are talking about it and taking advantage of the family friendly atmosphere here," she added.

This year a special indoor kite flying performance



Colorful kites like the ones seen here filled the skies in Port Allen for Kite Fest Louisiana 2011. This year's crowd surpassed previous years.

was available for spectators. Stam says additional new venues are being planned for Kite Fest 2012, including an indoor flying concert and outdoor night fly. She says a trial run of that event was well attended. The dates for next year's Kite Fest are set for April 1-3, 2012.

State approves tourism dollars for West Baton Rouge Parish, awaiting BP

The Lieutenant Governor's Office, which oversees the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, and British Petroleum have approved an application for almost \$26,000 in tourism funding for West Baton Rouge Parish. Sharon Stam, executive director of the WBR Convention and Visitor's Bureau says the one-time money comes from British Petroleum's oil spill fund.

The bulk of the money will be used to produce promotional materials on West Baton Rouge tourism. Stam says the visitor's bureau plans to have the videos produced with part of the funds.

Stam says the tourism industry is moving away from paper brochures and posters. She adds that many of the representatives from travel shows and tour operations are requesting promotional videos or electronic presentations. "We are making sure that our operation is up to industry standards," Stam said.

The 5-7 minute video will feature the West Baton Rouge Museum, Addis Museum, the riverfront, Port Allen locks and all the parish festivals and events. Also highlighted will be the West Baton Rouge Conference Center and West Baton Rouge Arena.

The funds will also be used to update the bureau's tourism website. Stam says the arrival of the 2011 United States Bowling Championships will receive attention in the video because of the benefit West Baton Rouge Parish will gain because of its proximity to the event.

TOWN OF BRUSLY

Brusly Fire Department experiencing surge in activity, seeks volunteers

The phones started ringing off the hook when the New Year started at the Brusly Volunteer Fire Department. Assistant Fire Chief Kenny Hunts says during the first couple weeks of 2011 the department was taking about four calls a day. "It is more than we've had in the years I have been with the department," Hunts said.

All those calls put a strain on the small staff of six paid firefighters and 20 volunteers. Hunts points to a couple factors that are connected to the dramatic increase in calls, mainly more residents and no new firefighters. Hunts says the need for more resources rose even higher in March. "We are operating at peak capacity," he said. "On about three occasions recently, we responded to two calls at the same time. It's getting tough."

The calls for emergency assistance from emergency medical response to homes and vehicle crashes along Highway 1. Those are in addition to the traditional calls for grass, trash and house fires. "The responders are using all their training to help in every type of emergency. It is important for the public to understand that we are not just fire protection, but we are emergency support in a variety of situations," Hunts added.

Hunts says the need to consider adding more paid firefighters to the department is a reality. "The trend around the country is moving toward 24-hour on-call shifts. It would be ideal for Brusly to have that type of emergency response."

All of this activity has a direct connection to the homeowner insurance rates for Brusly property owners. The Property Insurance Association of Louisiana, the group that sets the fire ratings for municipalities, looks at these statistics to determine what type of rating to

assign. The number is significant because it signals insurers on the premium amounts to charge.

Hunts is encouraging more people to step up to volunteer with the department. Currently, the majority of volunteers come through its relationship with Brusly High School. "Many of the students that we get from Brusly High happen to be from the wrestling team because of word of mouth," he said. The commitment to be a volunteer is heavy in the beginning. Volunteers are required to take 250 hours of safety training courses in

the first year of service and it continues with 150 hours each year.

Hunts says he is not expecting throngs of volunteers to overwhelm the department, but he says a dialogue should begin to discuss opportunities to increase the paid staff at the department. "We cannot do anything to stop the growth in Brusly, but we can make sure we are prepared to protect all residents with better than standard fire and emergency protection," he said.



Blake Panepinto (shown left) and Mike Parault (shown right), both residents of Brusly, are paid firefighters with the Brusly Volunteer Fire Department. Both men are career, full-time firefighters. Panepinto was also a 3-time state champion wrestler at Brusly High School.



Ready to roll: Putting the focus on partnerships, membership

“Ready to roll,” that’s my motto. In everything I do, “ready to roll” means giving it my best. In the short time that I have been serving as the Executive Director for West Baton Rouge Chamber, I have had the opportunity to learn about the many assets of this wonderful parish. West Baton Rouge is a parish of diverse businesses and people striving to make this community the best place to live and conduct business.

The goal of the chamber is to be the primary source of information for current and prospective businesses and individuals looking to learn more about our asset rich community. The West Baton Rouge Chamber is working to be a vital partner in local business life.

Currently our Chamber is developing programs for our members regardless of size. Businesses both large and small should expect that the Chamber will attempt

to enhance their revenue and help build the bottom line.

The Chamber is currently strengthening partnerships in both the public and private sector; partnerships like the West Baton Rouge Parish Government and the Port of Greater Baton Rouge that will keep West Baton Rouge competitive during economic downturns. Please remember, there is strength in numbers and working together will make our current businesses stronger, and hopefully, our cohesive efforts will attract new industries and a skilled workforce in West Baton Rouge Parish.

So, come join the West Baton Rouge Chamber, we invite your business or you as an individual to be a part of our team. Please bring your community pride, energy, enthusiasm, and your resources, together we can achieve smart, planned growth in our parish!



Kathy Stuart
Chamber Executive Director

West Baton Rouge Chamber announces new executive director

The West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce introduced Kathy Stuart as its new Executive Director on March 1. Stuart has served as the Hammond Chamber of Commerce Executive Director in Tangipahoa Parish and also on the City of Hammond’s Economic Development Board for several years. Stuart is a Hammond native. Her marketing background of over 20 years highlights new business development, legislative and non-profit work.

“We are excited over this hire for our Chamber. Kathy brings chamber and economic development experience that we feel will move us in a very positive direction for our parish,” said West Baton Rouge Chamber Chairman Ricky Sparks.

New director introduced at Chamber crawfish boil

The West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce hosted a “Meet and Greet” crawfish boil and social on March 23 to introduce the Chamber’s new executive director, Kathy Stuart, to Chamber members and local leaders. Held at Hero’s Plaza across from the parish courthouse in Port Allen, the event drew approximately 150 people. Here are photos from the gathering.

