



PHOTO CREDIT: DUSTIN HOWE



A MESSAGE FROM MINDEN MAYOR TERRY GARDNER

"THE LAST YEAR HAS CERTAINLY BROUGHT ALONG CHALLENGES FOR THE CITY OF MINDEN, BUT WHEN I THINK OF HOW THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE EACH PLAYED THEIR PART IN ORDER TO ADAPT TO A NEW NORMAL, IT FILLS ME WITH HOPE FOR OUR CITY'S FUTURE," SAID MINDEN MAYOR TERRY GARDNER.

GARDNER SPOKE OF THE CITY'S DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR, INCLUDING AN INCREASE IN LOCAL SALES TAX AS WELL AS MANY NEW BUSINESSES OPENING IN MINDEN. "EVEN THROUGH A PANDEMIC, MINDEN SAW TREMENDOUS SALES TAX GROWTH. WHEN LOCAL BUSINESSES NEEDED THEM MOST, THE MINDEN COMMUNITY STEPPED UP AND SUPPORTED THEM THIS YEAR LIKE NO OTHER BEFORE," SAID GARDNER.

"ON TOP SUPPORTING EXISTING LOCAL BUSINESSES, MINDEN SAW TWENTY-ONE NEW BUSINESSES OPEN UP OVER THE PAST YEAR, IN SPITE OF WHAT SOME MIGHT EXPECT. THIS JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT THE LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS WE HAVE HERE IN MINDEN ARE ADAPT-ABLE AND CREATIVE ENOUGH TO THRIVE IN ANY BUSINESS CLIMATE. IT ALSO SHOWS THE CITY'S WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT OUR BUSINESSES AND HELP THEM FLOURISH."

HE ALSO TOOK TIME TO THANK MINDEN MEDICAL CENTER FOR THE PIVOTAL ROLE THEY PLAYED IN KEEPING THE CITIZENS OF MINDEN WELL.

"THE CITY IS ALSO LUCKY TO HAVE MINDEN MEDICAL CENTER WHOSE DOCTORS, NURSES, AND SUPPORT STAFF HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC AND CONTINUE TO WORK IN ORDER TO CARE FOR OUR CITIZENS AND GIVE THEM TOP OF THE LINE TREATMENT," SAID GARDNER.

THE MAYOR STATED THAT AS THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WERE IN NEED GREW, MORE PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY REACHED OUT TO OFFER THEIR HELP.

"THE GIVING SPIRIT OF MINDEN WAS ON FULL DISPLAY THIS PAST YEAR AS WELL. EVEN IN A PANDEMIC THE COMMUNITY CAME TOGETHER TO HELP THE ST. JUDE AUCTION RAISE \$1.6 MILLION DOLLARS. IT JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT TRULY, NOTHING COULD EVER STOP THE GOOD THAT THE CITIZENS OF MINDEN WORK TO ACCOMPLISH," GARDNER.



Mayor Terry Gardner



*Steve Cropper
Minden Police Chief*



*Kip Mourad
Minden Fire Chief*



*District A
Wayne Edwards*



*District B
Terika Williams-
Walker*



*District C
Vincen "Cheeze"
Bradford*



*District D
Tommy Davis*



*District E
Pam Bloxom*

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ECONOMY PROFILE 2021

A challenging first year on the job for new director



SMART

My first year as the Economic Development Director was more challenging than I imagined. The Corona Virus Pandemic “crippled” our growth, I say crippled because we still grew substantially, although it wasn’t as much growth as I had envisioned. The year 2020 made us dig deep and look for components that others would overlook. We still wanted to promote Minden and attract investors of industrial and manufacturing companies. However, we made sure

that we helped our current businesses remain open and helped new entrepreneurs accomplish their goals of opening their own business. I enjoy finding and solving my own problems, though it is even more gratifying for me to help others solve their problems. I became a committee member of SWID to help improve and expand our district. We assisted with having American Rubber Products secure a second building in SWID, we also helped a sister company of Smith Family Farms establish a processing plant in the SWID. We also created a logo for the Economic Development Department so that we and our work could

be recognized easily. We also adopted the motto “Embracing Growth. Embracing Opportunity,” since as we continue to grow we continue to have more and more opportunities. I’ve always had a passion for helping the community, so as I got settled in with my new role in 2020, I started to reach out and become more involved (Well I tried to get involved as much as I could with Covid-19). I started with helping St. Jude with the on air auctions, helping assist in a peaceful protest against police brutality and discrimination, joined the Lion’s club, assisted with voter registration, became a committee member for MLK Day celebration, and started a

coat drive to help local children in need of a coat to stay dry and warm through the winter months. I plan on getting even more involved this year and the years to come as I continue to meet so many great people. Phillip and his wife Kaneshia also had a special gift for 2020, they welcomed their 3rd child Emery Ali Smart. The Smart’s also purchased a home in 2020 close to the Historic District in downtown Minden and are eager to grow their legacy.

PHILLIP SMART | ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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Rising from the ashes

Impressions Advertising overcomes devastating fire and pandemic challenges to find success in 2020

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

It's been quite the journey for local business Impressions Advertising over the course of 2020. The building that previously housed the business burned down earlier this year in January, enough to deal with on top of all the ensuing complications that the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it later in the year.

"We lost everything. The ceilings were on the floor. Within ten minutes of being there, I realized everything was a total loss," said Watson during an interview, merely the day after the fire had taken place. While many in this circumstance might be demoralized and reeling from the loss, Impressions without missing a beat immediately started planning how they would adapt and continue to serve their customers.

Watson is always quick to compliment his team, who was able to pull through that incident, getting back to work mere hours after learning that the old building was gone.

"Before the fire was even out I told my staff to head over to Hamburger Happiness so we can start planning what we were going to do," said Watson. "At 10 o'clock everyone spread out in different directions getting everything we needed to get our office back together. We have a great staff

that can pull together when they have to."

Watson's sentiments towards his staff rang even truer when he addressed them before the Ribbon Cutting, getting teary eyed as he told them how much he appreciated them.

On top of that, Impressions had to deal with the pandemic as well which came soon after and provided its own set of challenges faced not only by Impressions but also businesses around the world.

Despite the year it's been, Impressions now has a new location located on Frontage Road and is looking better than ever with a new showroom to show off their products as well as plenty of space for their offices, conference room, and equipment needed to create their promotional products.

"I got such a good staff. We're a distributor of all these promotional items. There are 8 different multi line reps... I've been doing business with these guys for 20 plus years, and we're just one big team. They support me heavily," said Watson.

"It's been a real journey getting to where we're at today. They were so supportive. They've donated much of the inventory you see in here to get us up and running."

One of Watson's favorite new additions to the new property was that of their showroom, which he feels can give customers a better idea of what exactly his business can offer to them. In the showroom shirts, jackets, hats, towels, and countless other merch were lined from top to bottom

showcasing the variety of different products and different ways that can be branded.

"An ink pen lasts three to five years. Owned on average during that 3-5 years by 6 people, and on average 17 people will see that pen per owner. That 102 people per pen, if you buy 1000 ink pens, you can reach 102,000," said Watson.

That's just a pen, as previously mentioned, Impressions offers a wide variety of products such as hats, shirts, and towels that can be expected to stay with someone for a longer period of time and be seen by more people, which is ultimately any promotional product's goal.

"We want to grow. We're already the biggest in north Louisiana, and we want to grow some more. And this facility really makes a statement that we're here to stay, so here we are," said Watson.

"If all you want to do is pass stuff out, we're not going to be your guy. But if you want to put together a program, target industries and individuals, then you need to call us."

From beginning to end the journey that Impressions Advertising has taken over the past year showcases the diligence, hard work, and perseverance that has gotten the business to where it is today. When presented with the living nightmare of watching years of work turn to literal ash, instead of being knocked down, impressions rose from those ashes and created something even better in its place.



Relationships a great source of pride for Minden Chamber

While many of us have adjusted our daily work routines and activities, the importance of giving thanks is not diminished by the challenges of the pandemic. 2020 highlighted the importance of celebrating small victories, appreciating friends and neighbors, and remaining grateful for health and safety.

I am grateful for the incredible relationships, that allow all of us to serve the Greater Minden community. These partnerships proved crucial in a year of navigating a crisis and adjusting to constant unknowns. We are fortunate to live in a community that, through leadership, strength, and resilience, comes together with a focus on serving each other and bettering our quality of life.

I do not mean to minimize the financial impact on our businesses, families, and every facet of Webster Parish, but we have learned so much about our community, each other, and our friends and neighbors in



2020.

I also have deep gratitude for the many Webster parish, city, school district, public safety, healthcare, and essential services personnel who work tirelessly combating the COVID crisis and who jumped into action when multiple hurricanes threatened our area. Time after time I have found myself giving thanks for

their professionalism, commitment, knowledge, and dedication to our community. Often, it is thankless work in the sense that most of us do not realize the tremendous effort and sacrifice of personal time and preparations, as well as exposure to risk, these individuals experience to serve and protect our community.

Leading by example became of paramount importance. We had never been in a year quite like 2020, so letting people see our humanity – the worry about paying bills and keeping the business afloat, the uncertainty of an illness we knew little about, and more – became the norm, rather than the exception. It was OK not to have all the answers for once. It was OK not to be OK.

Many of us have found that the good of the community is rising on our priority lists. It was difficult for many to tune out the hardship and not react. I know of several people who regularly bought carryout food or shopped online for items they

would typically purchase at a big box store because it was necessary to buy local during a tough time.

While all of our challenges will not suddenly disappear, with compassion, kindness, patience, and steadiness, we can navigate the challenges and capitalize on the many opportunities and make 2021 the best year yet.

As the Chamber continues to adjust our programs and public functions, it is still the intent to better the Greater Minden Chamber of Commerce going forward.

The Greater Minden Chamber of Commerce wants to hear from its membership and of course, the chamber wants to grow its membership as we work to improve business and the quality of life in Minden and surrounding areas.

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By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

The COVID pandemic has been rough on a lot of local departments and businesses, but this could not be truer for Minden Medical Center, whose employees from Physicians and Providers to support staff have all worked tirelessly to ensure that citizens in

Webster Parish received the best treatment they can offer.

Minden Medical Center has been able to adapt to the challenges brought forth by the

Pandemic to treat COVID patients while also being able to care for patients with other

Healthcare needs. To speak with us about the hospital's experience on the front lines of the battle with the virus was Jim Williams, CEO and Mandi Hart, Director of Physician

Relations and Business Development.

Williams states the most important thing he wants our community to know is that MMC cares about the community, and if anyone is in need of healthcare please seek help without fear the hospital is a place where catching the virus is more likely than other places in the community. "People don't need to be scared to come to the hospital. They should seek the care they need, and we have a slogan for that. We call it "Welcome Back to a Healthier You". We simply want everyone to know Minden Medical Center is safe and ready to provide care to our community."

Williams is confident in the hospital's ability to treat patients safely and effectively.

"Now that I have learned so much about COVID and witnessed our response to it, which I've been part of and helped lead through, I feel safer in the hospital than anywhere else in the community," said Williams.

"This illness has to be taken seriously, but the hospital is taking all the necessary precautions to

ensure our patients, visitors and staff are safe."

Overall, Williams was confident in the hospital's ability to continue to care for patients, citing data from the Louisiana Hospital Association, stating "There's about 15,000 hospital beds in Louisiana. Even during the peak spikes of the virus, COVID hospitalizations have taken up about 2,200 of those beds. That represents about 15 percent of the State's bed capacity dedicated to COVID. While that sounds like a lot, the health care system hasn't been stressed to the point of crisis in most areas. We have experienced challenges in staffing and our people being tired, but we have a great team of physicians, caregivers and support personnel who have overcome these challenges and made us very proud."

While the hospital has been able to meet the healthcare needs of parish citizens, that isn't to say this hasn't taken a toll. "It takes a toll on people, not just the physical work, but emotionally it's hard too," said

Hart. "'We trained for a sprint and now here we are in a marathon.'"

On top of the toll of caring for patients, there was also a toll faced due to the reduced amount of socialization hospital staff was able to experience with patients and with one another.

"When we locked the hospital down, to the public and internally, we were trying to limit people being in areas where they might be exposed to the virus. That has had an impact as well because our staff members are accustomed to seeing us round on them regularly, and when you're not doing that it further isolates people taking care of the COVID patients making them feel alone," said Williams.

On that note, Hart added, "Just little things like shutting our cafeteria down to the public, I think has had a huge impact on our community. Every morning, we saw the same people eating breakfast and every afternoon they were there for lunch. I miss all the people that I got to see every day at lunch and visit with. And that further isolates our elderly community so much, because a lot of them are living alone and isolating themselves."

In spite of it all, Minden Medical Center's staff has risen to the occasion and have continued to provide for their patients. They are even currently coordinating drive thru vaccination clinics so the "at risk" population can easily receive their vaccines.

Both Hart and Williams want to thank all of the individuals and businesses who provided donations during the pandemic. "Minden Medical Center has been blown away by the tremendous amount of support we have received from various groups and individuals throughout the community. Donations have included crocheted ear savers, food for our staff, personal protective equipment, hand sewn hats, sewing of masks, sno-cones, ice cream treats, cards with words of encouragement, candy, and an outpouring of prayer on our behalf. We have always known how awesome it is to be a part of the

Minden community, but to be on the receiving end of that love and support confirmed what we already knew. Minden truly is the smallest town with the biggest heart."

When it comes to caring for their patients, Hart believes the fact they are a community hospital is what sets them apart from other health care facilities. Where the people taking care of you aren't strangers, but your neighbors, too.

"The difference here is the people make up our hospital and we know our patients.

You know, we go to church with them, we went to school with them, and you don't get the kind of care in big cities that you do right here in your local community," said Hart.

A community hospital relies on community support, and especially after a pandemic, it cannot be understated how vital Minden Medical Center is to our parish and its citizens. If there are people who are wondering what they can do to further support Minden Medical Center for the work they have done and continue to do, it really is as simple as when you get hurt or sick, choose your local hospital to provide for your healthcare needs.



Rehab facility provides high quality of life

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

Town and Country Health and Rehabilitation is the only locally owned and operated facility in Webster Parish and is the home of 145 residents in Minden, La.

Since 1974, Town and Country Health and Rehabilitation has recognized what is important to each of our residents. To help our residents achieve the highest possible quality of life. When it comes to quality, our dedicated staff makes the difference. They are sensitive to the physical and emotional needs of each of our residents. It's about the human touch, whether it's seeing dreams realized or a small daily victory; we share our resident's triumphs by providing a personal touch in an atmosphere of love, compassion and acceptance. To see residents' dreams realized and to see even the small daily victories.

When a loved one needs residential health care, whether just for a period of recovery or to assure long-term safety and care, Town and Country Health and Weston Place of Minden provides an ideal environment of care and first class amenities. Located in a peaceful country setting, the facilities common goal is to provide a real home

and the best possible quality of life for its temporary and long-term residents. Staff members treat residents as they would their own family members, while providing outstanding physical care.

Our interdisciplinary team works together with each resident's doctor, therapist and other health-care professionals to develop and individually designed specialized care plan to meet the specific needs of each resident. This plan is implemented by our dedicated and professional staff. The purpose of QAPI (Quality Assurance Performance Initiative) in our organization is to take a proactive approach to continually improving the way we care and engage with our resident's, caregivers and other partners so that we may realize our vision to take care for those you care for the most: it's not just about existing, it's about living. It's about love, family and friends. Living a life filled with faith and hope for the future. To live a life with dignity, safety and comfort care. To do this all employees will and do participate in QAPI efforts which support our mission by helping our resident's achieve the highest possible quality of life. When it comes to quality our dedicated staff makes the difference.

Town and Country Health and Rehabilitation has a nurse practitioner Monday- Friday and on

call during the weekends. We offer Pet Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy, RN Infection Preventionist, LPN Infection Preventionist, Whirlpool Therapy, RN coverage 7 days a week, Certified Wound Care RN, Skilled Nursing Care, RN's and LPN's (7 days a week), Master Social Worker/Patient Advocate, Regular Physician Visits, In-house Nurse Practitioner, Private and Semi-Private Rooms, Flat screen televisions with cable in all the rooms, Beauty/Barber Shop, Dietician planned meals and Medicare and Medicaid Certified.

The resident's enjoy daily activities with the Activity Department. They enjoy field trips outside the facility as well as shopping, Town and Country has volunteers visiting with and participating in activities with the resident's. The facility hosts several clubs for residents including: Red Hats, Sportsmans Club, XYZ Club, and Cooking Club.

Our owners are in the building every day, even on the weekends. Their love and compassion is not just for Town and Country, their eyes are always focused on the residents and making sure that they get the best care and their needs are being met and we're advocating for them correctly,"

Go MORE when it's OUTDOOR!



GRAY

Go MORE when it's OUTDOOR! This is the mantra we have adopted amid the COVID-19 pandemic and luckily for Webster Parish, there is plenty to discover outdoors! Over the past year, interest in outdoor recreation skyrocketed as indoor attractions, restaurants and events adhered to restrictions put in place in hopes of slowing

down the spread of COVID-19. The impact was greatly felt in the hospitality and tourism industry worldwide. As destinations began to restructure their advertising efforts to focus more on outdoor recreation, Webster Parish was prepared to welcome visitors to our lakes, bayou, trails and byway.

We welcomed RV campers, day-tripper and the occasional passerby as they drove in for an escape to the upland mixed hardwood forest of Webster Parish. Throughout the spring and summer months, you were almost guaranteed to spot a kayak or two along the bayou, pick up on the scent of freshly grilled hamburgers or witness a beginner fisherman reel in their first catch. The slow, steady pace of the outdoors seemed to provide the relief that many were searching for.

As spring transitioned to summer, we participated in our first moonlight paddled down Bayou Dorcheat guided by members of the Bayou Chapter of the Ozark Society. Each participant brought their own gear and snacks as we prepared to embark on an evening adventure of the bayou. To our surprise, nearly 50 people traveled in to participate. After a couple of miles, paddlers rested along the banks of the bayou for a quick bite and the sound of laughter permeated the atmosphere giving us hope that pure joy could be found even in times like these. As the sun set on the first half of the trip, excitement erupted as paddlers turned on their flashlights acting as the only guide down the bayou ahead. The moon slowly appeared and light glistened on the water to lead us to our final destination.

The love of the outdoors continued to rise as people began to search for new destinations to explore withing driving proximity. Increased web traffic, social media followers and mentions to our channels gave us hope that during a time when so many felt disconnected, we had something they undoubtedly needed. Our energy to promote recreation opportunities, restaurants and small businesses didn't cease and because of this we received the accolade of being named one of the "10 Perfect Places to Paddle" by LouisianaTravel.com!

Locals and visitors alike were taking advantage of our waterways and all of that adventure is



guaranteed to work up an appetite. Our restaurant owners and staff worked tirelessly to keep their doors open while adhering to the governor's guidelines. We watched restaurants offer new services like curbside pickup, delivery, and adjust their menus to accommodate families ordering takeout. Amid the new regulations Jodie Martin, owner of Geaux Fresh, was recognized as a finalist for Country Roads Magazine's Small Town Chef Award. As the magazine editor began to ask Jodie questions about what makes her business so strong and profitable, it became evident that there was much more to Minden and Webster Parish to be discovered.

Country Roads Magazine editor, Jordan LaHaye, reached out to our office in hopes of establishing a 24-hour itinerary to write a story about our beloved community, and boy did we deliver! Although we only had a day and a half to finalize her visit, we were able to introduce her to the fun and flavors of Webster Parish, Louisiana. On the afternoon of her arrival, we toured Minden's historic districts, shopped on Main Street, visited antique shops, all while discussing the unique history of Germantown Colony and annual events like Grilling on Main, Springhill's PRCA Rodeo, and Main to Main Trade Days. We savored the flavors of barbecue "frachos" at Smokin' J's, sweet and spicy black bayou sandwich at Geaux Fresh, homestyle breakfast at Hamburger Happiness and drive-in sushi at Yummy Sushi! Before we could let her go, we made sure she discovered our good nature on Lake Bistineau. Her visit was indeed, memorable and through her talent she conveyed a beautiful story highlighting the characteristics of our community that make Webster Parish such a great place to live and visit. Her story titled, "Food for the Soul: Eating My Way Through Minden, a Place of New Beginnings", went on to be named number 6 in the Top Twenty Stories of 2020 in Country Roads Magazine.

With this kind of momentum, Webster Parish Convention and Visitors Commission entered the fourth quarter of the year with great ent-

Webster Parish Tourism notes several outdoor attractions

husiasm. Our eyes were set on hosting our first paddle event and increasing advertising for our annual Main to Main Trade Days. With the help of the Bayou Chapter of the Ozark Society, Webster Parish Sheriff's Office, Village of Dixie Inn, H2GO Paddle Store, Coca-Cola Bottling of Minden and Seafood Empire we were able to exceed our goal of 80 paddlers and welcomed 144 paddlers, some who traveled as far as Dallas, Texas! As we launched over 100 boats down the bayou, my heart was filled with joy and appreciation for how much support we received from local volunteers and businesses to make this event happen. Watching others willing to be a part of something bigger than themselves to help our community succeed made me realize that anything we put our hands to, will prosper. This was also evident in our efforts to increase awareness of Main to Main Trade Days. South Louisianians and Texans flooded our office with calls regarding participation. Due to the nature of this being a predominately outdoor event, we were able to increase vendors and visitors in comparison to years before.

Nearly three years ago, I had the vision to host paddle events and increase visitation to Webster Parish. Little did I know, it would be my saving grace during a time when so many of us experienced the pressure and challenges of being isolated, shut it and distanced. Statistics show that being outside can boost our energy levels, clear our minds and enhance our creativity. When we get down to the roots of our mission statement, that is what I believe we are accomplishing. In my opinion, a "highly desirable visitor and meeting destination" offers much more than attractions and restaurants; it offers an experience that leaves us feeling rejuvenated and hopeful that world we live in is full of people who simply want to make our communities stronger, richer and memorable.

There are many great things to accomplish for Webster Parish and over the next month or so, we will use data to strategize and implement our next phase. In the meantime, I can share with you all that our Beginners to Paddling Course sponsored by H2GO Paddle will be on April 18, 2021 at Caney Lakes Recreation Area and our second Open Paddle will be held on May 15, 2021. Further details will be uploaded to our website www.VisitWebster.net, Visit Webster Parish! mobile app and social media channels. Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube under the handle @VisitWebsterParish.

SERENA GRAY | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WEBSTER PARISH
CONVENTION AND VISITORS COMMISSION

In extraordinary times, ordinary people are called upon to do extraordinary things. We call them heroes.

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Meadowview a cornerstone of Minden's economy

Our facility, a Nexion Health affiliate, offers a home-like setting influenced by our own unique regional culture. We have a trained and knowledgeable staff who work hard to make our residents and patients feel comfortable in a warm environment. Our commitment to excellence is reflected in our positive clinical outcomes, resident and family member testimonials, satisfaction reports and American Health Care Association Quality Awards.

We consider our facility as a cornerstone to Minden's economic success, culture and community service. Led by our administrator Rebecca Myles, Minden native and named 2018 Young Professional of the Year South Webster's 15 Under 40. Myles volunteers for multiple organizations: St. Jude Chili Cook-Off, Back to School Bash, First Responders' appreciation event, as well as many other events. She is also a former Girl Scout troop leader. Our facility has only benefited from her deeply rooted passion for her community. While Meadowview has always been involved with the community, under Myles's leadership, we have become a permanent trusted participant in "all things Minden!" We are also especially proud to support the award winning health-care system of Minden through our relentless collaboration with local hospitals and post-acute providers to care for the frailest individuals who at times turn to us for their last chance of recovery.

<https://press-herald.com/myles-named-young-professional-of-the-year-south-websters-15-under-40-honored-at-gala/>

Bronze Commitment to Quality Award

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- Foster an environment that recognizes the value of our staff, our customers and our volunteers
- Respond to the ever-changing health care environment with innovative and cost effective solutions
- Operate a socially conscious and profitable company

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- Social Services
- Activities Director
- Nurses & CNAs
- Rehab Therapists

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Take care of the short and long term needs of our residents:

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- chronic disease management and education, including: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), congestive
- heart failure (CHF) and pneumonia
- specialized rehabilitation services: physical, occupation and speech therapy and respiratory services
- wound care modalities, in-house ankle brachial index (ABIs), selective debridement, negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT)
- dementia and wound care

certified clinicians

Our Administrator and Director of Nursing are supported by experienced long term care operators, certified wound care and clinical specialists, in-house nurse practitioners and physician extenders who go through rigorous routine skills validation and ongoing education.

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Telemedicine

- iDocsWeb provides easy access to several different types of specialists, including: wound care services, tele-psychiatry and tele-neurology, physicians, physician extenders and specialists 24/7.

Rehabilitation Services

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- lymphedema
- multiple sclerosis
- orthopedics
- osteoporosis
- Parkinson's disease
- spinal cord injury
- sports injury
- stroke
- shoulder and back injuries
- chronic pain
- contractures
- edema
- diabetes

- respiratory disorders (ie: CHF and COPD)
- orthopedic care for patients who have injuries or undergone joint replacement surgery
- outpatient therapy

Long-Term Care

- Our goal is to make residents feel at home.
- We offer numerous accommodations to give our residents the freedom and comfort they want and deserve.
- Admissions are accepted 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- spacious private Medicare suites, available for short-term residents during skilled service stays;
- active resident council giving residents the freedom to give input;
- Nexion Neighbor Program, connecting a staff member with each resident to provide extra attention and support

Amenities

- Internet access and resident e-mail
- Beauty parlor
- Spacious private Medicare suites, available for short-term residents during skilled service stays
- Fun events throughout the month and special events on a monthly basis

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We provide a variety of activities on a daily basis to help inspire and encourage our residents mentally, physically and emotionally.

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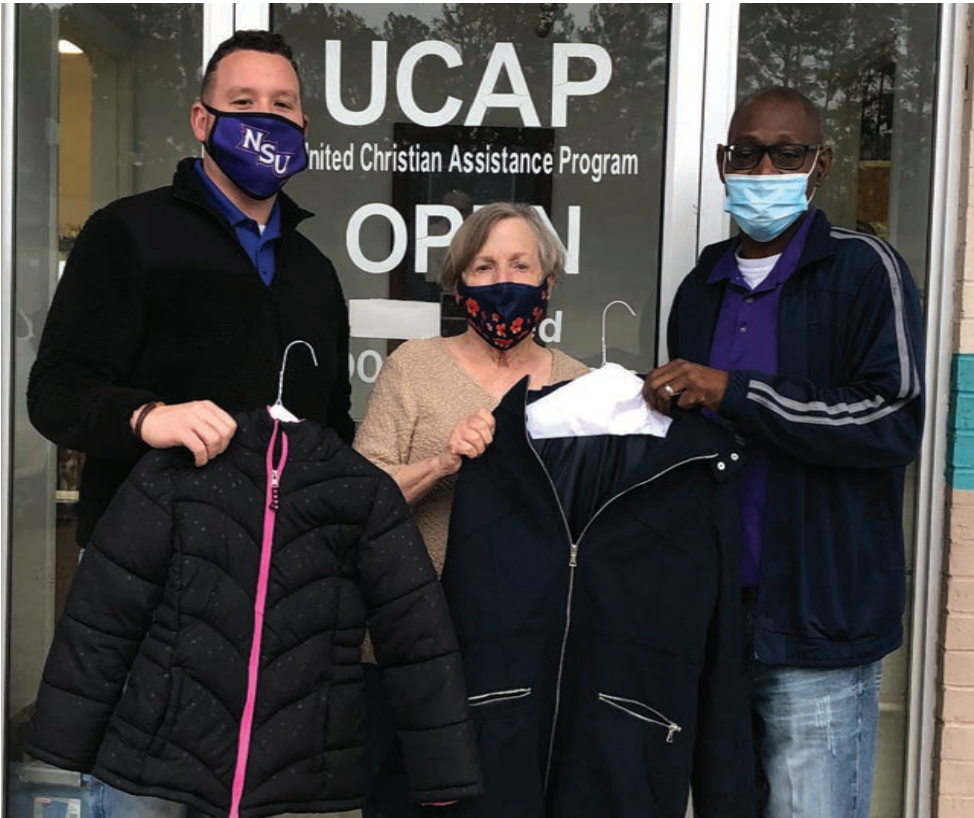


A community who cares



PHOTO GALLERY ▲

The spirit of giving that Minden has become known for only got stronger to rise to the occasion of the challenges this year has brought. Organizations and individuals alike contributed their personal time and effort to help those in need. From donating to food drives to feed the hungry, raising money, and even in some cases, COVID recoveries donating their own blood and plasma, citizens found creative ways to meet the needs of the parish.







Back-to-Back!

Joy Davis makes history two years in a row

Hello, My Name is Joy Journey Davis, I am Miss Minden 2020 and 2021. In 2020 I made history as the first African American Miss Minden.

This year I make history as being the first Miss Minden to be crowned twice.

This year I am excited to work on more community service projects and serve the City of Minden to the best of my abilities. This year is drastically different from the year I was crowned. I am a college student now living almost 2 hours away, but I am still planning to be involved and offer some virtual services for anyone I can help. For example, myself along with Phillip M. Smart, the Development Director from the

Mayor's Office are planning a Virtual Talent Show that will help focus on our town's talents. We have a Partnership with Northwestern State University to help bring more focus to theater and arts.


I will also be doing an interview series about the different types of opportunities and careers available in theater and arts. I plan on visiting Minden every opportunity I get and being involved with in person volunteer work.

I just want to Thank God, Northwestern State University, and the City of Minden for my chance to grow.

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St. Jude Auction keeps up fundraising w/\$1.6M

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

The Minden St. Jude Auction kept up its breakneck speeds of fundraising raising a whopping \$1,650,349 for St. Jude's Children's Hospital and pursuit of letting no child suffer from cancer. In spite of an international pandemic, event organizers, volunteers, and generous donors all came together to ensure that the Minden St. Jude Auction was as much a force for good as the previous years.

"We got back together through zoom meetings and telephone conversations, and we decided, after taking polls, that we would go forward and we would do whatever we could do, and that whatever bid raised was more than if we weren't here at all," said Event Organizer Melissa Brown.

Laura Hollingsworth, Event Organizer, added, "Kids didn't stop getting sick throughout the pandemic. We have local families that got diagnosed that had to be up there on their own. So we just decided that Minden and Webster Parish and all the surrounding areas were still gonna do whatever little bit we could do."

Thanks to the work of those at St. Jude, one of those families was able

to attend the auction in person this year after having to spend roughly eight months as an inpatient at the hospital.

Hutton Hays along with his mother Cristi Garrett spoke of their experience at the hospital, being a first hand receiver of the cause that Minden works to support every year.

"It feels really good to be well finally," said Hays. It's gonna be a year ago on the tenth of February that I went to the hospital with back and chest pains, and they came back and told me it was most likely lymphoma leukemia, and got sent to St. Jude."

He admitted that his mother more than likely had a better recollection of their time in the hospital than he did. Their time there was also unique because Hays was admitted mere weeks before the pandemic came along and changed the protocols of the hospital, the most difficult of which they mentioned was not being able to have friends and family over to visit.

"It's a wonderful place. We're so thankful that we were able to go there. We had some rough patches, and it was during COVID, so I had to do it by myself. We couldn't have family members there," said Garrett.

However, even with the difficulties they faced during their time there, the doctors, nurses, and staff there did an excellent job, and sta-

ted that the experience wasn't like staying in a traditional hospital.

"The nurses and the doctors and the staff there, there's just no words to express how wonderful they are, and it was great not to have to worry about paying bills, they just take care of everything you could possibly need while you're there," said Garrett.

"We're so thankful for this auction and the supporters who give. They give from their hearts and they don't even know our story. We're so thankful for that as well."

Hayes went on to say, "It's a weird feeling. We've always watched it, but you look at it completely differently once you've been to St. Jude and see what all the money goes to.

"I just want to thank everyone for everything they give to St. Jude, so people like me can live, I guess you'd say, and not have to worry about anything."

The Minden St. Jude Auction has always viewers and listeners tuning into the auction when they weren't able to be there physically for the event. This coupled with most adapting to taking parts in events virtually, the auction saw an overwhelming amount of support through their website, raking in raffles months before the auction even started.

"We opened up and our numbers were great. The internet blew us out

once again this year," said Brown.

"For our Grand Prize tickets we were at over 3200. I don't know if we've ever sold that many grand prizes."

"We can't remember a time that we've had," added Hollingsworth.

The winners for some of the big-ticket raffles include Patricia Powell who won herself the coveted western themed playhouse on top of the Grand Prize as well. For the Partners In Hope Raffles, the winner of the \$5000 Cash prize was Jessica Murdock, the winner of the Disney-world Trip was Denise Garcin, and the winner of the TV Package was Mark Killingworth.

As a cherry on top for an St. Jude Auction unlike any of the past, the Grand Prize Raffle Winner Patricia Powell, in a selfless display of philanthropy made to honor the memory of her husband who passed away, chose to donate the cash prize of \$50,000 back to St. Jude.

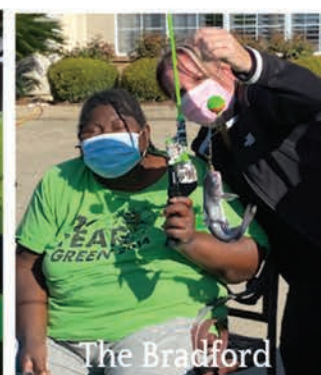
"She said she was so excited because what she wanted to do was donate it back. She and her husband Jimmy, who passed away a few years back, they've always been big supporters, and she knows that that's what he would want as well. That no child should have to suffer with cancer," said Hollingsworth.



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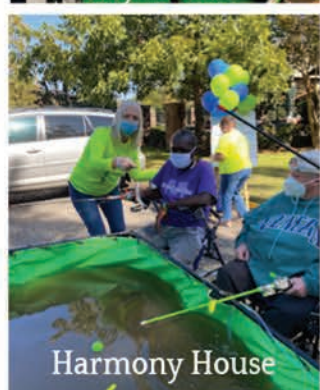
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Helping hundreds of families



By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

The Joe LeBlanc Food Pantry has been serving Minden, LA and surrounding Webster Parish cities since 2007 when it was founded by The Christian Church at Minden. This year, people needed more help than ever, and Joe LeBlanc delivered.

Through overwhelming community support through sponsorships as well as selfless volunteering, the pantry's Feed-a-Family program this year was a smashing success.

"Our biggest volunteer groups were Lakeside's Baseball team and the 3rd floor crew from First Baptist Minden," said Lewis Director of the JLFP. "We distributed about 200,000 lbs of food which is the equivalent of what we passed out in an entire year just a few years ago."

For a frame of reference, in 2019

Joe LeBlanc gave out 516,000 lbs of food and packed 8228 bags for the community for the entirety of that year. They gave out nearly half of that in just one day of distribution.

"The first car was in line at 7 p.m. the night before distribution and by the time we opened the gates at 9 a.m. the line stretched out to Lewisville Road," said Lewis.

The pantry is able to achieve these groundbreaking feats through the support of local volunteers and finances donated through individuals and local grants. Volunteers are always needed, especially through the summer months.

To find out how to help, just call the office at 318-299-6375 or visit their facebook page.. Their monthly food distribution is held on the 3rd Saturday of every month from 9-11 a.m. For anyone seeking food assistance can contact their office to see what information needs to be provided.

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Rec Center pushing health to new heights

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

Rocke Musgraves and the Minden Rec Center are still pushing Minden health to places it's never been before. Even during a pandemic, Musgraves and his staff have been hard at work with a number of budding projects for 2021 and beyond.

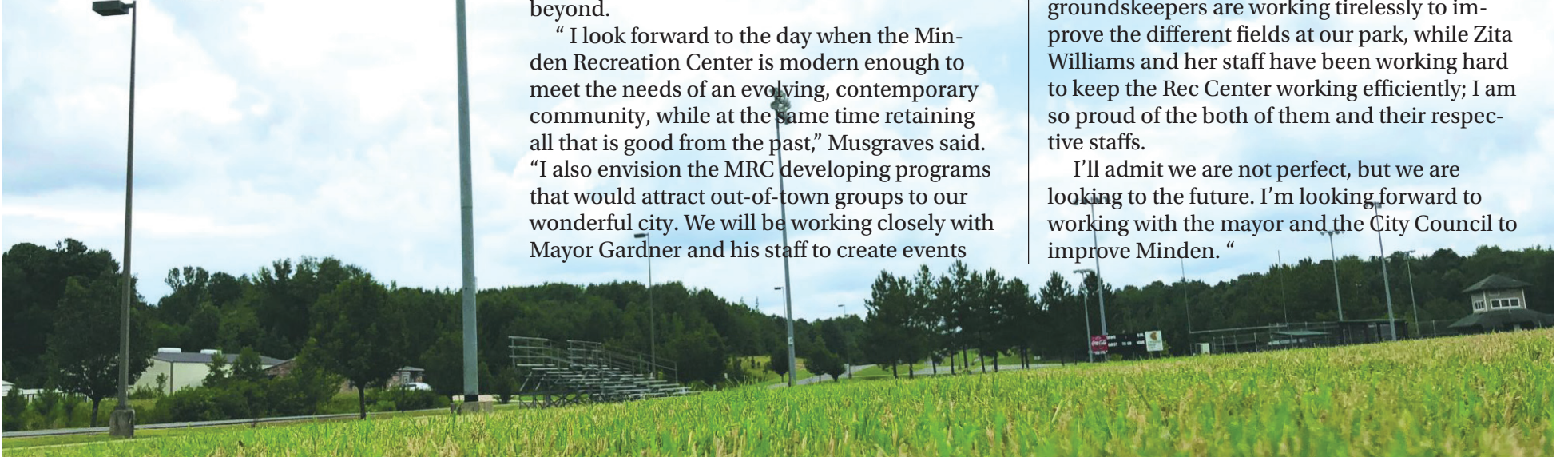
"I look forward to the day when the Minden Recreation Center is modern enough to meet the needs of an evolving, contemporary community, while at the same time retaining all that is good from the past," Musgraves said. "I also envision the MRC developing programs that would attract out-of-town groups to our wonderful city. We will be working closely with Mayor Gardner and his staff to create events

that make an economic impact on our city."

"In order for us to reach our goals, we are going to need the public's help. We are forming different advisory committees to get useful feedback and work with ideas for a recreation program that meets the needs of the Minden citizenry.

Our staff is working hard to better our facilities and offerings. Frank Torrence and his groundskeepers are working tirelessly to improve the different fields at our park, while Zita Williams and her staff have been working hard to keep the Rec Center working efficiently; I am so proud of the both of them and their respective staffs.

I'll admit we are not perfect, but we are looking to the future. I'm looking forward to working with the mayor and the City Council to improve Minden."



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Making the most of the lost season

Glenbrook's Harmon, Mandino get scholarship attention

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

Glenbrook's Hayden Harmon and Maddox Mandino have made the most of a lost season by picking up scholarship offers from the University of New Orleans after impressive showings in the PBR Showcase in Covington.

Mandino and Harmon both finished in the top-3 at their position and number one each for the class of 2023.

"Hayden and Maddox are two of the hardest workers I know," Coach Holden Orgeron said. "During quarantine they took it upon themselves to get better. They worked out, hit and threw just about every night at Glenbrook."

Harmon and Mandino are potential top-ranking prospects in the class of 2023, and scholarship offers give the young athletes leverage to be able to have options for choosing where to play at the next level.

"Hayden's fastball has seen 88 mph at times,"



Orgeron said. "He turned a lot of heads with that. Before the NCAA entered the dead period, my phone was blowing up about both of these guys. UNO, ULL, Ole Miss and a few other schools were asking about them."

Despite the upheaval of the normal schedule due to COVID-19, Mandino and Orgeron are keeping focus, performing at showcases and featuring in travel-ball tournaments to showcase their skills.

"UNO has offered them both," Orgeron said. Maddox may be the best high school player I've



ever seen. He plays the game harder than anyone plays it. A true leader, he leads by example and is vocal."

Mandino set the tone for the summer with a home run in his first at bat, and has put on muscle to build out his frame.

"They are both great kids who come from great families," Orgeron said. "They make coaching fun and easy. I'm extremely grateful to have them at Glenbrook and for our athletics program."




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Doyline stars dominate prep basketball

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

Doyline's Jamaria Clark and Jamaari Markray are dominating North Louisiana

Doyline has two of the best players in the state, and they're not going anywhere anytime soon.

Coming off of a state championship last season, the Panthers lost their leading scorer and Legendary frontcourt star in Decari Markray.

Decari was the two-time MPH All-Parish Player of the Year. Many outside of the program assumed Doyline would struggle to maintain dominance after losing such a seminal player.

That's not to mention other All-State and All-Parish performers lost in point guard Jordan Fuller and forward Javeon Nelson. Going back two seasons, Coach Michael Normand has shown a knack for producing university-level talent, including David Lockett who joined Decari Markray as a college performer.

Decari Markray is now down the road playing ball at BPCC, yet Doyline has maintained their claim as a top team in the state thanks to a pair of youngsters who more than made a name for themselves last season.

Jamari Markray hit the game-winning shot in the state title game against two-time defending champions Simsboro.

He's picking up where he left off this season, averaging 25 points per game through Doyline's perfect 7-0 start.

Perhaps even more impressive has been sophomore Jamaria "Juicy" Clark, who is averaging a staggering 33 points per game, including his 37 point, seven rebound, four assist, three steal and one block performance in the Panthers' 95-87 win over Saline this week.

"They're the best backcourt in the state," Normand said.

Normand knows a thing or two about talent: he's now one of the winningest coaches in Louisiana history after notching his 600th career win last week.

Markray had a double-double against Saline with 22 points and ten rebounds.

Armondre Dotie put up 22 and eight himself.

Doyline won't be sneaking up on teams this season the way they did in 2020, but that hasn't stopped them from putting up some pretty surprising performances en route to a perfect start.





Lady Apaches take state cross country title

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

The Glenbrook Lady Apaches are the 2020 MAIS 2A Overall Champions for the 2nd year in a row. Emma Pitman is also the individual MAIS 2A XC Overall champion for the 2nd year in a row. Our top seven runners, securing the team title with 36 total points to finish ahead of Marvell Academy (54 points) were: Emma Pitman 1st 21:38.11 Mattison Fowler 2nd 21:39.84 Vivian Still 4th 23:37.85 Sophie Spillers 10th 25:43.37 Gabi Brown 20th 27:44.68 Lela Margaret Miller 21st 27:57.96 Emily Chanler 23rd 28:25.65

The rest of the Lady Apaches running the 5k distance were: Macee Smith, Amelia Lott, Olivia Downer, Hannah Day, Gracie Purvis, and

Sophie Downer.

Five of our Lady Apaches ran the 2 mile race. Our top 2 mile girl was Laurie Killgore with a time of 15:50.01. Our other 2 milers were Hallie Harmon, Gwyneth Lott, Anna Morales, and Lainey Holmes.

The boys team grew to seven runners this year. Six of them ran the 2 mile. Nick Killgore was our top boy with a time of 13:34.82. He was followed by Tucker Pitman, Landry Merritt, Brody Walker, Cade Frye, and Eli Still. Steven Bridwell ran a personal best on the varsity 5k course.

"It was a crazy year for us due to Covid," Coach Keith Pitman said. "We were only able to run in one practice meet and one meet in Texarkana. Three other meets we had entered were cancelled. I wasn't sure how the overall title or individual title in the girls race would play out this year due to the limited

schedules all teams faced and losing three of our varsity runners from last year."

Pitman had to work for the individual win this year to beat out 7th grader, Mattison Fowler. Fowler will be one to watch for years to come. She is very talented and works extremely hard at practice. Pitman led the Glenbrook trio of herself, Mattison, and Vivian through the first mile with about a 20 second lead over 4th place.

By mile 2, Mattison had taken a 10 second lead over Pitman, while a Benton Academy runner had taken over 3rd, and was right on Pitman's heels. Coming to the last turn before the final 200 meter climb, at the new for 2020 Choctaw Trail course in Clinton, MS, it was Mattison with about a 30 meter lead over the Benton Academy runner and Pitman another 25-30 meters back.

Pitman kicked it in at the start of the climb and sprinted to 1 second victory over her teammate, Mattison, and 8 seconds ahead of the Benton Academy runner. Vivian Still brought home a solid 4th place finish. Our 4th-7th runners stepped up big this year.

Sophie Spillers ran a personal best and came home 10th, which was huge for us in the points standings. Gabi Brown (20th), Lela Margaret Miller (21st), and Emily Chanler (23rd) rounded out our scoring runners to secure the title.

Emma, Mattison, Vivian, and Sophie made the All-MAIS XC team with their top 10 finishes.

"Super proud of the work all my runners put in this year despite the circumstances," Pitman said. "All of the Apaches did great at the Overall Meet, and most set a personal best time."



Minden High breaks ground on gymnasium

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

A storm in the spring of 2016 brought extensive damage to Minden and surrounding areas, and along with that also caused the Minden High School Gymnasium. Now, nearly five years later, Webster Parish School Board Members, Minden High School Staff, and Community leaders got together to celebrate the first step towards getting a new gymnasium for Minden High with a Groundbreaking Ceremony.

Introducing the ceremony, MHS Principal Becky Wilson stated, "There's an old proverb that states, just when the caterpillar thought that the world was over, it became a butterfly. On Tuesday, March 8, 2016, Minden was battered and beaten by a heavy storm. By Saturday, March 12, when the rain finally subsided, many historical records were broken in our area due to receding over 20 inches in rain. Throughout our community, a massive amount of damage ensued from the flooding. Our gym, which was built in nineteen thirty eight, suffered irreparable damages, resulting in it being declared condemned," said Becky Wilson, MHS Principal.

"For our school, for our football team, the many students that use that gym every day, and even our community, this pillar of pride was destroyed. Like the caterpillar who thought it was over, a butterfly will

soon emerge through the hard work of many, many people, including many of you standing here today."

Superintendent Johnny Rowland took to the stage to share in the occasion and elaborate on the importance of this Gymnasium not only as a facility, but also as a symbol of the community coming together to support their students.

"As Miss Wilson said, it's been almost five years since that day in March that we'll never forget, that frankly changed our community and in some ways changed it forever. But we are so thankful to be able to stand here today to provide a facility that we feel will be second to none anyone in the state," said Rowland.

"Our staff members and most importantly, our students will have the use of a facility that they can be proud of, that they can feel good about, that they can look to when they're sitting in those bleachers across the way over there on a home Friday night football game and not only see this beautiful view that we all see here when we're at a home game, but also look across here and just go, wow, how blessed we are."

"And, you know, it just stays in keeping with how the citizens of Webster Parish, over time, have supported our schools. So when it passed, the bond issue passed, it was of no great surprise to me because our citizens stepped up once again and said, 'you know what, we're going to provide for our most important natural resource and that our students,'" said

Rowland.

"So in the words of, who we all knew as Hall of Fame football player Deon Prime-time Sanders, now he's the head football coach at Jackson State University. He says, if you look good, you feel good. And if you feel good, you play good. And I like to add this to it. Not only does that mean uniforms, and it also means facilities and our kids are about to have facilities that they can be proud of for many, many years."

Mayor Terry Gardner was also present and shared his thoughts on what this new gymnasium means for not only MHS, but the City of Minden as a whole.

"You know, through devastation, comes growth, and that's what we have here from the devastation that the football field had. You've got a fantastic football field now. This is just going to be the crowning start of this campus. You know, when businesses come to any city, they look at the campuses of your school. Schools are important to any industry that's come to pay. They look at your schools," said Gardner.

Providing a perspective who was directly impacted by the loss of the Gymnasium, Coach Heard provided some input on the challenges he and his teams faced due to the circumstance, and his appreciation that they would soon have a second to none facility for his team.

"You know, I wouldn't say it was totally easy transitioning from the old gym to where we are now. And then getting to this point, there's been some struggles

along the way.

But for the most part, the staff that I have right now is the same staff that was here then. I've had them the whole way, and they stuck through all of that struggle, and we've had a lot of success along the way even with some of those struggles. So I appreciate you guys staying with me through this whole thing," said Heard.

"Looking at today, when you read the paper, you watch TV, or look online, you see a lot of negative things out there, but it's good to know that good things are still happening, and this is one of those things. I would just like to thank the good people of Minden for seeing this as an opportunity for the youth of today and the youth of tomorrow and all that it represents. It's going to be fun to watch and I can't wait until this thing is complete and we can open those doors."

In closing, Principle Wilson spoke of a quote that she feels encapsulates what the building of the new facility means for Minden High School students, staff, and the community at large.

"In your program at the bottom, I included a quote by Adrian Parkson that said, 'each of us is carving a stone, erecting a column or cutting a piece of stained glass in the construction of something much bigger than ourselves.' And I feel as we watch our new building being constructed, I hope that this is a reminder to each of us to keep constructing something much bigger than ourselves," said Wilson.



WEBSTER PARISH SUPER BOWL ▲

JJ Sneed came out of nowhere for a swath of NFL fans. Under-the-radar when he was drafted 138 overall by the Chiefs in 2020. Draft analysts quibbled over his supposed flaws, while those of us who have seen him play since lining up at wide out for Minden High under Coach Spencer Heard knew he was special.

"From the very beginning, I believed JJ was one of, if not the most talented player I've had the chance of coaching," Heard said. "He has always had confidence and that confidence has undoubtedly played a huge role in his ability to succeed at the highest level."

Sneed lined up on Super Bowl Sunday in February as the Chiefs took on another Webster stand out in Devin White and the Bucs.

For Heard, having one of his own on the game's biggest stage is no small feat.

"It is a very gratifying experience to see one of our own make it to the biggest stage in the world!"

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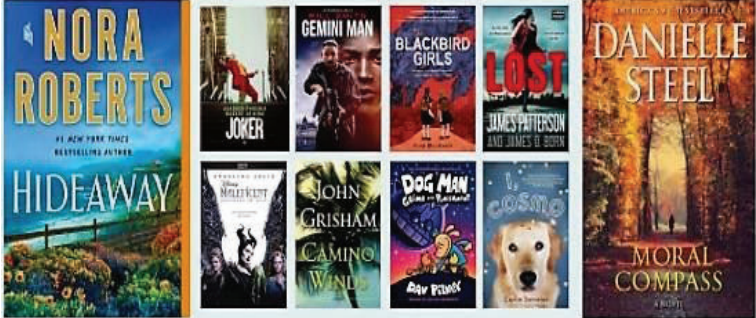




WEBSTER PARISH LIBRARIES

2020 | YEAR IN REVIEW

Top Ten Checked Out Titles



SERVICES ADDED IN RESPONSE TO COVID

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15,307

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11,802

Reference Questions Answered

93,816

Visits to our Website



23

Average Attendance Per Program

Libraries offer more than books to community

Webster Parish Libraries provide countless services to the community during pandemic

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

Webster Parish Libraries faced many unprecedented challenges due to COVID-19. Recognizing that the community relies on many of its services, library staff developed innovative ways to serve patrons safely. Considering the many challenges presented by the pandemic, the library is grateful to be able to continue providing es-

sential services and library materials to patrons. Savannah Jones, Director of Webster Parish Libraries, stated “Our library system recognizes the importance of making our services and materials easily accessible to patrons during these unprecedented times. We are currently taking proactive measures to continue to bring the library to its people with exciting upcoming new developments.” Webster Parish Libraries saw a little over 69,657 visits at our Spring-

hill and Minden branches alone. This represents patrons who used the system to safely access books, movies, program kits, and more. Online services such as Kanopy, Hoopla, and Overdrive allowed patrons to access e-books, audiobooks, movies, and even television shows without leaving home. More than 31,600 items were streamed this way. Eleven thousand eight hundred and two reference questions were answered, and more than 15,300 in-library public computer sessions were utilized.

Among new services added in response to COVID-19 are Contactless Curbside Pickup, Homebound Delivery Service, and special Educator Passes designed to offer educators in Webster Parish special borrowing privileges. Wi-Fi Hotspots were added as well. Those saw 241 circulations and are still in significant demand. Your library saved its patrons a total of \$2,109,088.68 through use of materials and services.



NLTCC is 'Inspired, Equipped and Ready to Work'

New motto of Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College is focus of every step taken at the college

FROM STAFF REPORTS
Minden Press-Herald

Over the last few years there have been a lot of changes at Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTCC). The college is based in Minden, Louisiana, with additional campuses in Shreveport and Mansfield. Our college along with other colleges due to the Covid-19 pandemic had to reevaluate our mode of delivery of educational content. The pandemic stopped the educational process for colleges and universities across the nation. Northwest Louisiana Technical Community College (NLTCC) instructors and staff came together and overcame the limitations of the pandemic by moving courses to a virtual learning environment.

In the fall of 2017, college leaders began to look in the mirror and try to better understand our role in the

changing communities we serve. This focus did not stop due to the pandemic, it only became more enhanced. We continue to listen to our students, staff, community leaders, and the employers that hire our graduates. This journey of self-evaluation helped us to understand that we were a good college but had the potential to become a great college. More importantly, an even better partner in the lives of our students and the communities we serve.

Our next step is to focus on why students choose to attend and why businesses recruit our students. While we would all love to believe students attend so they can receive a beautiful diploma with the college name and chancellor's signature at the bottom, we know that is not true. Students come to us with a dream of a future; a future for themselves and their families. So, our motto is "Inspired Equipped and Ready to Work." It makes a nice hash tag but, more importantly, it is the focus of every

step we take at the college. It is the culture in every classroom, every department, and every decision that happens at NLTCC. Every student that walks through our door brings a different story, but every one has the same goal - a future!

WHAT'S CHANGED?

In the fall of 2018, NLTCC began a transformation in our scheduling system moving away from traditional all day everyday 16 week semesters. NLTCC 8 weeks terms, and in some cases even 4 week terms, continues to be recognized around the state as the new standard for many colleges to achieve. This schedule allows students to attend part time when needed on a Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday schedule. The updated scheduling has allowed for the addition of more night classes that has increased enrollment and student opportunities. This scheduling format has allowed flexibility in following the CDC guidelines as prescribed in the

fight to overcome the educational barriers due to Covid-19. Students can now enroll and start their journey every eight weeks and in many cases even sooner. These schedule adjustments are sending students and families speeding toward their future.

We invite you to visit www.nltcc.edu website for more information about your future in one of 29 programs. Our offerings range from High School Equivalency (Work Ready U) and a six-week truck-driving program to 18 to 24 months pathways in Nursing, Instrumentation or Welding. We are grateful to be back on campus doing what we do best: "Hands-on Training". We are currently enrolling for the 2nd 8 weeks Spring term that begins March 22, 2021 on the Minden, Shreveport and Mansfield campuses. Whatever the dream for your future, we are here to help you along that pathway.



Webster Parish schools continue to adapt

We always look forward to when we receive a call from the Minden Press-Herald inviting us to be a part of the annual PROFILE each year. It is a time where we can share and highlight with the community all of the positive things going on within our school district.

However, this year has certainly been like one we have never before experienced and we think it is imperative to focus this year's article on how our district has navigated through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last March, like most school districts, we were gearing up for Spring testing, extra-curricular activities, and summer planning. We could have never dreamed when we went home for our annual Spring Break that the break would be extended and we would be facing a world-wide health crisis. We watched the news hourly as things were closed and life as we knew it was interrupted indefinitely. During this time, our supervisory staff met for hours on end to determine the best way to meet the needs of our students and staff when we did not actually know when we would be able to return to school.

As the weeks wore on, we learned quickly that we would not be returning to a traditional school setting for

the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Our team quickly jumped into action to develop a plan for the 2020-21 school year. We knew that with so much uncertainty surrounding the issue of the pandemic, many of our families simply would not be comfortable in sending their children back to a brick and mortar setting at school. Through many, many meetings and discussions, the Webster Tech Connect plan was developed. This is a complete virtual school where our students could continue their academic progress with our own Webster Parish teachers while staying in their home environment. Developing this program did not come easy, but it is now a program that we are so proud of and look forward to continuing in the future!

The pandemic did not release its hold on the world and we, in turn, had to continue to adapt. The district developed a COVID-19 team that meets each and every week to discuss challenges, changes, and obstacles as things are ever-changing. We are beyond blessed that Louisiana Department of Health Dr. Martha Whyte and Epidemiologist Calandra Syngh meet with us as well and have been an invaluable resource for our COVID-19 teams as we continue to push through these trying times. Our schools also developed their own school-based

COVID-19 teams to handle all that comes with identifying potential cases, close contacts, contact tracing, and more. They have worked tirelessly with our school nurses to meet our student's needs as well as providing valuable information to our parents.

Our relationship with our local Homeland Security representative has grown stronger and we could not have even begun to open schools without their help in providing valuable PPE and assisting us in making state and federal contacts so that we had all of the information and supplies we needed for our students and staff.

There are so many people who have worked together to make this school year work. We are grateful for the fact that we are able to conduct school as we hear news reports daily of thousands of districts across the nation who have yet to meet in person this year. We recognize that it has not been easy and our teachers and staff members have had to be more flexible and adaptive like never before. We want to thank our teachers who have stepped up and been there for our students in Webster Parish! They have taught virtually, taught at home while sick, had their schedules changed numerous times, worn PPE, and so many other things that we never could have seen coming. Our teachers have

shown grace, dignity, fortitude, strength, and compassion in a time when they could have thought only of themselves and made it more difficult to have school.

We have tremendous support staff who are unsung heroes. Our custodial staffs make sure all COVID-19 cleaning and sanitizing protocols are followed. Their work loads have increased, but their attitudes have never wavered. Our school food service staff worked during state-wide shut-down to provide meals to students who needed them and never once did they complain and their efforts are much appreciated and do not go unnoticed. Lastly, we want to thank our parents, guardians, and other stakeholders who have worked with us and not against us as we have navigated through this year and for their trust in us to do the right thing for their children. We know we will continue to face more challenges ahead, but we have proven over and over again that for the Webster Parish School Board nothing is impossible when we commit to work together to provide the very best educational opportunities we can for all of our students.

We look forward to easier days ahead and someday, we will look back and realize this historic event made us stronger and more resilient.

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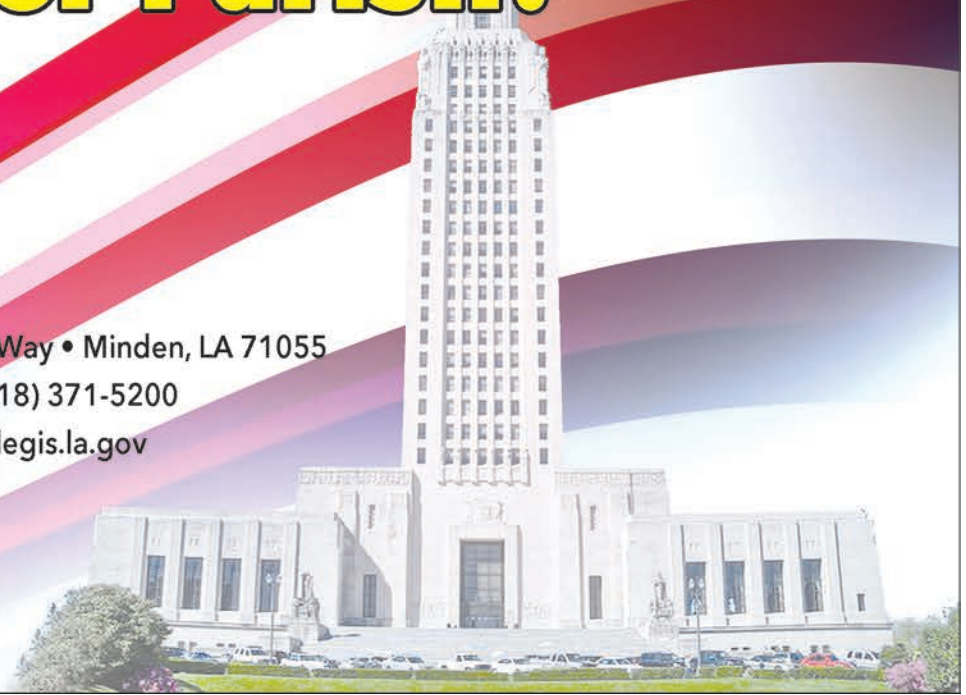


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GOVERNMENT PROFILE 2021



Minden mayor talks what's in store for 2021

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

The pandemic over this past year spontaneously put local leadership in a tough position, the Office of the Mayor for the City of Minden being no different. Mayor Terry Gardner took the time to reflect on the past year, the challenges it brought, and how the city adapted to meet those challenges. Gardner noted how he kept the Recreation Department of the City up and operational during a time when they weren't able to host their typical sporting events. "We did some major improvements there during COVID-19 to keep all of our employees busy and not have any layoffs. We decided to put their time towards making improvements not only at the Recreation complex, but at Ewell park." He spoke how on top of ettig Ewel

Park a facelift, he also upgraded the facilities including a computer lab as well as new batting cages for teh park. "We painted it on the inside. We painted it on the inside. We improved our computer lab that we have there to make it more of a destination point in that area. Now it can not only host our senior citizens for bingo and board games, but it's also a place for our young people to go and do homework. It turned out very nice." He also alluded to something new coming to the concession stands at the rec center this year when speaking about theri updates. "The concession stands have been redone and a lot of them have been reroofed. All of them have been repainted

inside and outside. We're getting ready for something different in our recreation concession stands this summer, you're going to see a new approach," said Gardner. Gardner also stated that Minden saw substantial growth economicaly for the city, pointing towards an increase in sales tax as well as new businesses coming to Minden over the past year. "Our Social Media Department and our Economic Development Department, they push the message to shop local and support the local economy. And this year, people have really done that," said Gardner. "While COVID has had a lot of negative impacts, one of the positive impacts is that it has brought the family unit together. They cook out in their backyard

together, they find local activities to enjoy with one another. And I think that's what brought our sales tax up." Of course, Gardner took the time to name a few key people who have excelled in their departments. The first that he mentioned was Steven Burdeaux, Minden's Airport Manager. "It's amazing, Steven does a great job for us. We've got all of our runways redone out there, our approach and landing. We've got one of the top airports for a small city in Louisiana for sure," said Gardner. He also spoke of Phillip Smart and Hayden McCalister in the City's Economic Development department, who on top of working and developing relationships with new and existing businesses to ensure their success, who have recently brought occupational licenses in house versus before when they were done by a third party service. Gardner predicts that this will en-



GARDNER



sure that businesses are up to code and fit to serve customers as well as bring in additional revenue.

Hayden and Phillip have done an amazing job with this. And like I said, it's going to generate a lot of extra money for the city," said Gardner.

"Before there was nothing in place. When somebody opened a new business, they simply walked in the light water department and that was that. Now there's a process that we go through for the safety of our citizens out there."

He also spoke of Minden's new HR Director

Well, this is our first H.R. manager that the city's ever had. So it was never even though the city has never had a manager before. And so far she's doing an amazing job.

Our applications are now online. So you can go online, fill out an application.

"It's really taken some of the work out for some of the other employees here. It was all scattered around and now it's all under one department.

And the department heads have really embraced that. They enjoy the help that they're getting advertised in the positions and that she can pre screen a lot of employees before they ever get to her. So she's doing a really good job. I'm very pleased with their performance," said Gardner.

Looking towards the future, Gardner is optimistic for his City. He spoke of new businesses coming to Minden, restoration of Minden's Downtown, and new programs to ensure that Minden is always presenting itself the best.

He spoke of a reimagining of the Clean Up Minden Campaign, stating, "Last year we hit it hard, cleaned up the city, and then we forgot about it. This year, I'm going to try to get different churches and civic organizations to adopt a section of town or roads to take care of. I'm hoping that if they see their fellow citizens picking everything up, maybe they'll stop throwing it out."

Along with that he also spoke of a new streetsweeper the city is getting, speaking truth to the idea that you

only get one first impression. "[The thing about the street sweeper is, I'm real big on a clean community. When a business comes to town, they look at several things when they decide whether or not they're going to invest locally, and one of those things is the cleanliness of the community," said Gardner.

"This is our community, and we should take care of our community like we take care of our families."

His philosophy towards making Minden a desirable location for businesses to set up shop appears to hold some weight, as over the past year Minden saw a significant amount of new businesses open up, with more being planned for 2021.

"The reason that I'm projecting growth in these corridors is, of course, we've already got Barksdale Federal Credit Bank under construction. We've got the new dialysis clinic under construction. We've got Minden Family Dental that just opened the home road. We've got another new doctor's office up tomorrow. We've got Minden Medical

Center opening up a new clinic. So that growth looks like it's carrying down Homer Road down 531 as well," said Gardner.

He also spoke of the future of Downtown, specifically an ordinance that was recently proposed that would incentivize property owners in Minden to sell their properties sooner rather than later. "With the new ordinance that they're working on for vacant buildings and businesses, I'm thinking that's going to spur the increase of different restoration projects downtown. Downtown is going to thrive in twenty, twenty one. It's going to have some new life breathed into it," said Gardner.

"Overall, when I think back on the year and what our citizens endured and overcame, it gives me great hope for this upcoming year. If our city can grow so much even when facing a pandemic, I can only imagine what we can accomplish once we can return to normal later this year."



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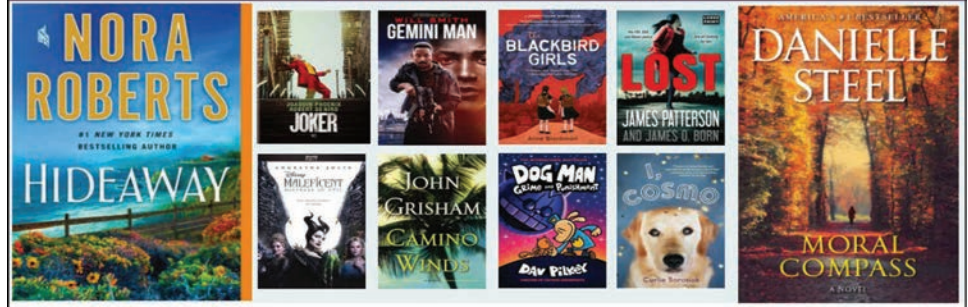


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WEBSTER PARISH LIBRARIES

2020 | YEAR IN REVIEW

Top Ten Checked Out Titles



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Sibley begins building town’s new water park

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

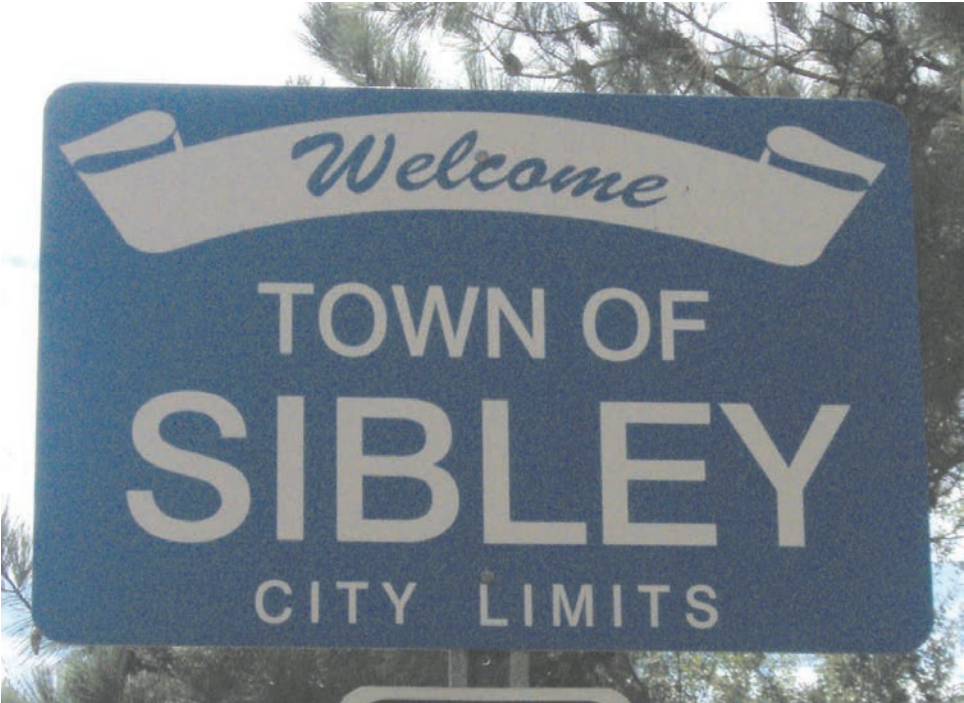
The Town of Sibley began construction of a new Splash Pad Water Park they are adding as an expansion to their recreation area.

“The Town of Sibley has had a vision for growth for years. This growth can be measured in many different ways such as population, annexation, infrastructure improvements and recreation,” the statement from the Town of Sibley read.

“We have had the walking track behind town hall for several years with the plan to expand this recreation area. It is because of the dedicated and generous leaders, cit-

izens and businesses in the area that the Sibley Splash Pad Water Park is, currently, under construction. Construction began earlier this year behind Sibley Town Hall on North Main St. This area will, also, have covered picnic tables for parents to supervise their children on the splash pad as well as a surrounding fence for safety.”

They were also sure to shout out CW&W Contractors for their contribution to the project, stating they had, “generously donated to this project in a most generous way. The Town of Sibley is very thankful for leaders, citizens and business owners in our community that are dedicated to future growth and to Sibley.”



Assessing greatness

Webster Parish gets a new tax assessor with swearing in of Denise Edwards

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

On January 5, 2021 Denise Edwards was sworn into office as Webster Parish Assessor by Holli Vining, Webster Parish Clerk of Court. Sharon Duncan was sworn into office as Chief Deputy Assessor and the remaining staff as Deputy Assessors.

"I am pleased and honored to have the opportunity to continue serving the citizens of Webster Parish," Edwards stated after being sworn into office by Vining. "I have served the citizens of Webster Parish as a Deputy Assessor and Chief Deputy Assessor for over 38 years and now I have the great honor of continuing my service to Webster Parish citizens as the Webster Parish Assessor."

"My goal for the next four years is to continue serving Webster Parish citizens with the same high quality, efficient, effective and friendly service that has become the Assessor's Office trademark," Edwards continued. "Serving the people of Webster Parish has been my life and my career for the past thirty eight years."

Edwards stated that devotion to the people of Webster Parish and dedication to the work she has loved for almost 40 years are the top reasons for her continued service as the new Webster Parish Assessor.

"My number one goal is to ensure the premium service currently provided to Webster Parish citizens by the Assessor's Office employees continues and is improved," Edwards explains. "I feel loyalty not only to the people of this parish but also to the people of this office who have served the public with great efficiency, friendly and timely service."

"Parish taxing districts, especially fire protection districts that are governed by volunteer boards of directors but also parish and municipal districts with paid staff often need assistance with interpreting



complex tax laws and ensuring all requirements are achieved in a timely manner in order to continue funding for public services," Edwards stated.

"I'm pleased to share my 38 years of experience and knowledge with the 24 taxing districts and assist the taxing districts staffs with much needed assistance in

setting their millage rates, getting the millage rates approved on time and filing the tax rolls which are all-important to ensure parish, municipal and district public services are funded and fully functional," Edwards continued.

"That's how our parish and municipalities fund public services such as our schools, law enforcement departments, water districts and fire districts which are all critical and important services."

"In order to ensure our citizens obtain all the benefits to which they are entitled, I will continue to assist and inform our Webster Parish citizens how to properly file for

homestead exemption and special assessment level freezes available to Senior Citizens and Veterans with disabilities and to assist with property assessment adjustments when possible," Edwards said.

Edwards is a Certified Deputy Assessor and a member of International Association of Assessing Officers which requires a thorough knowledge of how to conduct appraisals, Louisiana Tax Commission Tax regulations and guidelines. Louisiana State laws and regulations and current legislative changes and local taxing authority's procedures.

In addition to compiling, producing and filing tax rolls to the Louisiana Tax Commission, she is responsible for the computer systems and the office staff of nine – seven in Minden and two in Springhill – while knowing all policies and procedures.

Edwards said she is dedicated to ensuring every parish taxpayer is always provided technically proficient, effective, efficient, and cour-

teous service by the Webster Parish Assessor's Office Staff and leaves the office pleased.

"Also, I will continue to operate the Webster Parish Assessor's office efficiently and be a good steward of the taxpayer's dollar," she said.

Later in the ceremony, the new Chief Deputy Assessor Sharon Duncan chosen by Edwards was sworn in by Vining as well. When asked how it felt to be selected for the position, Duncan stated

"Honored, first, to work and serve with Denise. Denise is wise, she's knowledgeable, but she's also personal with people, so when you serve with someone like that, you get a well balanced person. Her position is to help all people, not some people, she doesn't pick and choose, so it's an honor," said Duncan.

"I have a lot of growing to do, because there are some things that the Chief Deputy does that I don't know, so she has a lot of training to do, and I have a lot of learning to do, but I'm willing to learn."

Edwards said of selecting Duncan as Chief Deputy Assessor, "I have all the faith in her. She's been here 20 years, so she's very knowledgeable on most anything in the office."

After the ceremony, Duncan on behalf of the staff of the Assessor's office presented Edwards with a bouquet of flowers, stating, "The Book of Ecclesiastes informs us that in all that we do; there is correct timing for all things under the Heavens! Carol Denise Edwards, it's your time to serve Webster Parish in the capacity of its Assessor!" said Duncan.

"Your staff would like to present you with this bouquet of flowers; as an expression of our love and gratitude, and may the sweet aroma of your bouquet fill your special day!"

Denise Edwards is the daughter of the late George Gossett and Barbara Reagan. She is the widow of the late Jody Edwards and they have four adult children: Charly Dew & Levi; Emily Kennington & Landon; Cady Pruitt and Cherokee Edwards and three precious grandchildren: Amzie, Aria, Paxton and Shep.

Webster Police Jury recaps a busy but successful 2020

BY WILL PHILLIPS

Minden Press-Herald

Earlier this year Police Jurors once again voted in Jim Bonsall as President, in no small part for his leadership and experience that he has displayed throughout his years on the Police Jury. Bonsall decided to run again because there are some upcoming decisions the jury will have to make, and he wanted to ensure that the Police Jury was in good shape before letting someone else take up the mantle.

This included seeing the transition of former Secretary Treasurer Ronda Carnahan who retired earlier in 2020 with the new Secretary/Treasurer Lisa Balkom, the new Sheriff Jason Parker, the negotiations for the contract of Webster Parish's landfill, as well as balancing the Juries budget to make it more fiscally sound after some unexpected reduced revenues over the course of 2020.

When speaking of former Secretary/Treasurer Rhonda Caranahn, Bonsall could not understate how much he appreciated her time at the Police Jury. "Twenty five years of experience went out the door when she did. She had a wealth of knowledge about everything that goes on at the courthouse just from experience."

"She knew what to expect every month of the year, what was going to happen, whether it be funding or expenses or whatever. She knew she was always looking ahead. She was on top of everything where it'll take a Lisa while to get to that point," said Bonsall.

"Lisa's going to do a good job, and she is doing a good job, but you miss that experience that can only come with time."

Next Bonsall spoke of the New Webster Parish Sheriff Jason Parker and how that transition was handled. We got a new sheriff with Jason Parker. Not that a lot changed, but the inner workings between the sheriff's department and police juries is kind of complicated," said Bonsall.

Jason, he pretty much just stepped in where Gary left and it was really easy on us."

The last personnel of the Jury that Bonsall spoke of is the late Pete Colvin, the Juries' former Permitting Officer who passed away earlier this year.

Pete Colvin was our permitting officer, and he passed away. He was every juror's go to man," said Bonsall.

"You know, we had a few problems in the permitting section that we really didn't even know about because Pete just took care of everything. And it wasn't until he was gone that we realized we had some problems."

If I had a problem, it didn't really matter where it was, I called Pete and Pete went and took care of it for me, and he's gonna be missed a lot," said Bonsall.

One of the decisions that Bonsall wanted to ensure he would have a say in the negotiations for Webster Parish's landfill operator.

"I had a lot of knowledge and it wouldn't have been right for me to leave it for somebody else that was behind the 8 ball on it," said Bonsall.

"We've been working on a new contract for the landfill operator. We've still got two years on our contract, but they have got some improvements they want to make out there, but they want to make sure they don't get another contract before they spend a million dollars out there."

"We're going to get it done. I don't have any doubt about that. Really, Republic has done a good job. We're just trying to get the best deal for the taxpayers that we can get."

Part of what made Bonsall want to make sure this contract was done right

was some of the confusion he experienced when trying to make sense of the current contract when joining the police Jury. Bonsall states that he wants to make sure that the new contract is easy to understand, so whoever takes up the mantle after him will have no trouble moving forward.

"I'm not sure how long the contract will be for this time. We just wanted to be a good contract so when I'm gone, or even when the next the president goes, whoever comes in behind them is able to read the contract and understand what it's all about.

The last topic is definitely a weighty one, as the Police ury this year faced unexpected drops in revenue, on top of increased costs that came along with COVID.

Explaining the key factors that played into this, Bonsall stated, "Natural resources in Webster Parish, we were down between three or four hundred thousand dollars, and it hit us hard."

"The state collects that tax and they're supposed to pay us a certain percentage of what's collected in Webster Parish. It used to be eight hundred fifty thousand. And then during Jindal's term, there was a lot of work done on this. We never could get really any more money except that every year they give us a two percent increase if the collection warranted it. So the two percent has built up over a few years to about one point two million, but we were down back to eight hundred fifty thousand this year. I don't really understand why, but that's what we were told from the state, that collections were down."

This left the Jury with roughly \$400,000 less revenue than anticipated from severance taxes. This impact was only exaggerated by ad valorem taxes being lower than they anticipated as well.

"I didn't know there was a problem until we didn't get our money. And even then, the tax assessor didn't realize that we wouldn't get all the money we thought we were going to get it because assessments were still up where they were last year, if not above where they were last year," said Bonsall.

Bonsall also cited the Criminal Court fees progressively going down over the past few years as another reason the Jury has seen decreased revenue in recent years. With decisions being mandated by the state, the Jury is often the one that has to enact those decisions. On top of not always getting the money they would need to enact the changes, these changes have also led to a decrease in the amount of revenue the Jury used to see from this area.

"One of the things that is really hurting us bad is the criminal court expenses. The fines and court costs are way down, and it didn't just happen this year, this has been going on for 15 years, but it is just steadily dropping for almost slight changes in laws, changes in the way they collect," said Bonsall.

"That's just one of many problems. You know, the times have changed, laws have changed, mandates have changed, and it always costs the parish more money. The state never gives you more money than it costs to do a mandate. Most time they don't give you money."

"The budget is going to be balanced, there's just not isn't there's just not any real extra money there. When something goes up or something, don't get funded over the last ten years, we've nickel and dimed that money we had set aside till it's really all gone," said Bonsall.

Suffice it to say, the Webster Parish Police Jury has a lot on their plate this year. While the road ahead may be trying, Police Jury President Bonsall and his fellow Police Jurors are working tirelessly to make sure that these matters are resolved and that the important work they do for the Parish continues.



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MPD get new K-9 unit

By Will Phillips,
Minden Press-Herald

Police Chief Steve Cropper wanted to introduce the Minden Police Department’s newest K-9 unit Bram and his Handler Sgt. Brandon Curry, who has been serving with the Minden Police Department since March of 2014. Bram graduated from the Little Rock, AR, K-9 Academy earlier this month.

“Sgt. Curry has been training with him in Little Rock and just got him graduated, certified, and Wednesday was Bram’s first day on the job,” said Cropper.

He stated that the MPD was able to purchase Bram due to the overwhelming support they received from when they raised funds to purchase Tigo, the MPD’s other K-9 unit. They received so much funding that they were left with enough to

get Bram as well. “This stems from the funds we raised when we got Tigo. We actually raised enough money to purchase this second dog too. It’s the people of Minden’s dog, it came from donated funds back when we were raising money for the first one,” said Cropper.

He also stated that having this second K-9 unit will make it so neither K-9 or their handler has to be solely relied on, and can now be dedicated to separate shifts.

Cropper also stated that a reason the department decided to get Bram was to fulfil a request that Sgt. Curry had made early in his career to be a handler for the K-9 unit. “Brandon’s been really wanting a dog ever since he’s been here, and he’s military, and I knew he was going to be a great handler, so we decided to go ahead and get this dog,” said Cropper.

Sheriff-Elect completes State Sheriffs' Training

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Minden Press-Herald

It's been a mere seven months since Webster Parish Sheriff Jason Parker took up his elected position, and in the very least you could say he and his department have hit the ground running. In this short period of time, Parker has redesigned shifts, patrol areas, and installed new substations so that deputies are more accessible to the entirety of the parish, taking over the responsibility of Animal Control by assigning a deputy to specifically handle those cases, started a Pastors on Patrol program to ensure his deputies have an avenue for internal support, and many other developments that will be featured below. All this was done while continuing the Office's regular duties of fighting crime to keep parish citizens safe.

The Sheriff himself sat down with the Minden Press-Herald to provide details on some of these developments as well as his thoughts on how they would benefit the parish. "I'm big on community policing. I encourage my deputies, if they're driving through an area and they see somebody standing in their yard, to stop and talk to them and, visit with them, see if they're what their issues are or if they have any complaints," said Parker.

This focus on being more involved in the community has been a factor in many of the developments that the office has undergone. Parker has been making changes in order to ensure that a wider area of the Parish is covered by his deputies more often, so they can reduce the time in between having an emergency reported and responding to it.

Part of how he has achieved this goal is by diving the parish into four regions, and ensuring that a deputy is patrolling each region during all shifts.

We've got four different shifts, two on days and two on nights and we have five deputies per shift. So normally, we will have two on the north end and we have two on the south end, and then we'd have a roaming lieutenant or shift supervisor," said Parker.

"When I took over, one of the main complaints was maybe not seeing the deputies patrolling out in the rural parish. So what I did was that I divided the parish up into four districts. So at any point, any particular time, we should have a dep-

uty in each one of those districts. What that does, that decreases our response time to an incident," said Parker.

"And they get a lot of positive feedback from the community, especially in the Doyline area around the lake and stuff like that. It means a lot to folks for them to be out and sitting on the porch or be out in the yard and see a marked deputy just drive by."

Parker also made note of the addition of two new substations of the Sheriff's Office, one in the north end of the parish and one on the south end, to ensure that citizens in those areas would have a closer place to be able to contact a deputy.

"Doyline town hall is now one of my Sheriff's Office substations and in the north of the parish, I've got one at Springfield PD, where a complainant can go, instead of driving all the way to Minden to file a complaint, or if they want to see a deputy," said Parker.

Furthermore, Parker is ensuring that his deputies are well prepared for any situation by getting them training, mentioning de-escalation training, diversity training, and even active shooter training.

"That's what they're going to be able to provide here pretty soon. We're going to be able to work with the community college, and they're going to allow us to have a classroom setting for these sessions," said Parker.

"The patrol deputy out there could be your next Sheriff," said Parker.

"I've got to not only worry about as long as I have here, but what's to come, and who's going to take my spot. The better trained deputies that we have out there, the better service they are to the citizens, and we're going to do everything we can to keep that freshly embedded in their mind. That training is a valuable tool."

Thinking even further on the well-being of his deputies, Sheriff Parker recently started what he calls the Pastors on Patrol Program, where a carrier of pastors from all across the parish make themselves available to local law enforcement and provide someone for them to talk to who are more experienced with what Parker's deputies have to deal with on a daily basis.



PARKER

"One of my deputies could go out in a 12 hour shift and see more evil than somebody does in their whole lifetime. Then they got to take that and then they got to go home and live a regular life," said Parker. "We're excited about having those pastors out there able to ride with our deputies, to develop a personal relationship and get to know these deputies, because we're human just like everybody else. I mean, we've got the same problems as everybody else."

Parker expressed his confidence in these pastors, not only for their help with his deputies, but also with their connection to the local communities they belong to. Each one of these pastors are pillars of their community in their respective areas. And, you know, I think that they've got a good heart beat, of what's going on in our community and the issues that we've got going on in our community," said Parker.

"Somebody asked me the other day, was it going to be for a year or whatever, and I said as long as I'm here, we're going to have this program as part of our Sheriff's Office."

Tackling the needs of the community, the Sheriff is tackling the parish's animal control issues by dedicating a deputy to be specifically designated to resolve such issues.

"David Robinson is our animal control deputy and he'll be mainly answering the dog issues and the cat issues in the rural areas and in our communities out in the country. But also, if we have a cow out or a horse out, we're going to try to help out as much as we can," said Parker.

This allows the office to have one person dedicated to resolving animal control issues in particular, meaning they will have more experience handling these situations than just sending out a patrol deputy.

"Because normally we would just send a deputy to that. If we have a cow out on Highway 532 and nobody knows who's cow instead of sending a deputy out there, we could send David out there as that animal control officer to try to find who the owner of the cow is and get them back safely in the pasture where he belongs. And if we can't do that, then we'll have a location where we can take him and keep them safely," said Parker.

The Sheriff's Office's Webster Parish Patrol Division, Narcotics Division, and Criminal Investigations Division have been hard at work tackling the parish's drug problem.

"Over these last five months our units have made over 50 narcotics arrests, seized 5 vehicles, one utility trailer, and numerous firearms. These arrests stemmed from traffic stops, distribution buys and possession charges. They have seized approximately 2100 grams of illicit narcotics which included marijuana and methamphetamines. The street values of these illicit narcotics were approximately \$210,000. These units have also seized approximately 21,250 illegal prescription pills valued at approximately \$106,250 with a total of all narcotics seized of \$316,250."

Parker stated, "I mean, we've only been in six months and we've been able to accomplish this."

Parker credits his experience in coordinating resources from both the state police and the DEA in helping his office to fight drugs in the parish.

"The narcotics background that I had, my experience bringing the resources in from the DEA and State Police, it has helped us out a lot," said Parker.

"We're kind of shorthanded as far as we have three full-time narcotic agents for the whole parish. We can make that phone call and have a dozen or so agents over here to help us on a case or investigation that may draw out, you know, two or three days. So it's not dipping into our budget or our funds here in the parish. It saves the taxpayers here money to be able to use their resources, which is a whole lot more than we have."

"And we're able to bring those resources to help put drug dealers like this right there in jail and keep our citizens safe. Now, are we going to be able to wipe everything off? There's just no way. But if you're dealing drugs here in the parish, we will make it very inconvenient for ya," said Parker.

Overall, the past few months have been very busy for the Sheriff's Office and the Sheriff himself, but according to him, he's simply glad to have the opportunity to keep his parish and its citizens safe.

"I've enjoyed the last seven months. It's been busy, but every morning I come into work, and I'm happy to be able to come and serve the citizens of the parish and I'm blessed, to be honest with you. I don't know how long I'll be here, but I will do the best while I'm here, and I will give 110 percent every day I'm here," said Parker.

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