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Minden, Louisiana

Profile
2022

**MINDEN
PRESS-HERALD**



A Message from Minden Mayor Terry Gardner

“It has truly been another fantastic year for Webster Parish, the City of Minden, and all the people who choose to call this place home. With COVID restrictions being lifted, life is returning to a sense of normalcy and, as a result, we’re seeing the community being more active and engaged than ever before.

Minden is seeing an influx of young entrepreneurs and family-owned businesses who are choosing to locate in our downtown area. Each one of these businesses are not only investing in Minden, they also contribute immensely to creating a distinct and unique small town atmosphere that I believe will get more and more people to spend their free time—and money—in Downtown Minden.

Of course, I also want to extend my appreciation to every business that chose Minden, regardless of where in the city that is, and for making the decision to become a member of the local business community.

It’s a very exciting time for Minden given HGTV’s decision to feature our town in their upcoming show Hometown Kickstart. Their selection shows that Minden is truly a town so special that it’s worth broadcasting to a national audience.

Extending past Minden to the Parish as a whole, our home’s exceptional nature is being noticed by many, including the Archery Shooter’s Association who chose Camp Minden as the location where they will be holding their annual Archery Association Pro/Am competition.

Both of these are huge honors in and of themselves, but they will also generate an influx of tourism that not only brings more to our local businesses and more tax dollars to Minden, but also will expose more and more people to our fantastic city, some of whom may even choose to call this place home.

I am, along with other community and business leaders, already working to make sure our city and businesses are ready to greet these visitors with open arms—ready to show off what makes our Minden great.

No matter how you slice it, this has been an exciting year for Minden, and it brings me great joy to know that the excitement isn’t over. We here at the city as well as countless members of the community are doing everything possible to take this momentum and use it to make Minden as great as it can be.

For these reasons, as well as countless others I don’t have the space to mention, are why I, Terry Gardner, Mayor of the City of Minden, choose to call Minden, Louisiana my home.”



Mayor Terry Gardner



Steve Cropper
Minden Police Chief



Kip Mourad
Minden Fire Chief



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Wayne Edwards



District B
Terika Williams-Walker



District C
Vincen "Cheeze" Bradford



District D
Michael Roy



District E
Pam Bloxom

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Contents:

ECONOMY
Pages 5-16

LIVING
Pages 17-34

GOVERNMENT
Pages 35-56



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ECONOMY *Profile* 2022

Webster Parish schools balance instruction with intervention

AMBER McDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

The Webster Parish School District started using the Balanced Calendar in the 2021-2022 school year as a way to schedule intensive interventions for students.

In the Balanced Calendar, four to six weeks of regular instruction are separated by two-week breaks called Intercession periods. There are three Intercessions per year. The total number of days students attend is the same but the summer break is shortened from about eleven weeks to seven, allowing for the Intercession breaks.

“Summer slide” is the term used to describe the knowledge and skills students lose over extended summer breaks. “We knew we had some gaps [in student achievement],” said Oreata Banks, the Elementary/PreK Supervisor for the Webster Parish School District. “We couldn’t afford these extended breaks.”

But the most important part of this new calendar is how



ROWLAND

the district is using the Intercession breaks. “Probably the most important reason we went to the Balanced Calendar is what I observed this morning, and that’s the Intercession,” said Superintendent Rowland.

At the beginning of the Intercession period, students spend three days receiving intensive instruction to help close those gaps before the next regular session. “They’re getting small-group, personalized instruction to do nothing but support the curriculum that we’re teaching and the activities and the strategies within that curriculum,” explained Rowland. “To see the excitement and the eagerness that the kids were showing in the classroom was very uplifting for me.”

Students who are already performing above grade level receive instruction to help push them even further.

“It’s all voluntary,” said Dusty Rangel, Curriculum Supervisor. “A couple of weeks before the Intercession period we send out a registration, or interest survey, to the parents.” The special instruction time is open to preK-8 students. Transportation, breakfast, and lunch are all provided and, during the Intercession period, school lets out at noon.

Currently, Intercession intervention is only for the first three days of the Intercession break, however, the number of days or hours may change over time. “We’re constantly monitoring and we’re constantly evaluating how we can

make it better going forth,” said Mr. Rowland.

High school has not been left out. They are conducting ACT prep classes for all four high schools in the parish. Ms. Hudson, Secondary Supervisor for the district observed students that were working toward improving their ACT scores. “They’re really motivated to get their ACT scores up. They were there, ready to work,” she said.

“Intercession is a large piece—a huge piece—of our overall district intervention plan,” Superintendent Rowland said. But it is not the only piece.

There are also school-wide interventions happening during the regular instruction periods. “For our K-8 schools and grade levels we have a thirty minute program set aside,” said Ms. Banks. “We put together a very intensive plan that would allow us to meet the kids where they are. We know they’ve lost a lot. It’s very structured. It’s uninterrupted intervention time. It’s uninterrupted—that’s the powerful part. We are able to measure growth and progress, and we have seen a whole lot of growth and progress with our kids.”

After two years of COVID-19 interrupting education, the Webster Parish School District is ready and working to help students catch up and reach their educational goals. “We’re really making an effort to celebrate growth and improvement,” said Rowland.



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Huffman Management - a family company

AMBER McDOWD

Minden Press-Herald

Huffman Management is a family company specializing in property and asset management; it consists of Jim and Kim Huffman along with their daughter Elsie. Jim and Kim have decades of hotelier experience. Besides their own properties, Jim also manages seven hotels in Louisiana for a hotel management company.

The Huffmans own Huffman House and are currently managing Grace Estate until their purchase of it is complete. Both of these bed and breakfasts are located on Broadway. They also offer short-term leases on a fully furnished house on Fuller Street; another short term lease will be available later this year on Dorcheat Road.

"That one's going to be fun and quirky," Jim said. "There will be a hen house, and we're going to have raised herb gardens and tomato gardens." The two bedroom/one bath Country Cottage will be available for long weekends or can be leased by the week or month.

The Fuller Street house, which is only a couple blocks from downtown, has a fully updated interior and also includes two bedrooms and one bath. The Huffmans plan to

update the exterior of this house later this year.

"Our long-term goal for Huffman Management is to really grow and develop the bed and breakfast side of it," said Jim. "Right now we're going to focus on the full renovation of what will become Huffman Manor."

"Most of our focus is going to be on adding the bathrooms at Grace Estate," said Kim. "Making sure that everything is done there to make it guest-ready." Once Huffman Manor (formerly Grace Estate) is renovated, it will have five bedrooms, five full bathrooms, and a powder room in the main house. The carriage house will be converted into a suite with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. They hope to have the new Huffman Manor guest-ready by this fall.

But there will be visible signs of upcoming changes soon. Spring cleaning has begun and new plantings will soon be added in the existing flower beds. "We're looking forward to getting the grounds cleaned up," said Kim. "We're just so excited to get color in front of the building again."

While they will not be advertising Huffman Manor during the renovations, long-term rentals to established clientele will be available. That way guests can be informed about the renovations before deciding to come. The satisfaction of the guests is paramount.

"We're really proud of our guest service scores," said Jim. "It paints a picture of who we are and how we conduct busi-

ness. Those perfect scores mean that we must be doing something right—that we're treating them right. In spite of the fact that we're more expensive, we are giving them value for their dollar. And that's important to us."

"When we first opened this bed and breakfast [Huffman House], I had become very jaded," Jim explained. "I'd spent the past thirty years being the guy that looked at reports. That was my job—but I fell in love with this industry because I love people. I lost sight of this as I became 'the report guy.'" Jim and Kim described how nervous they were the night before their first guests arrived. They couldn't understand their nervousness, since they were experienced hoteliers and felt confident in what they were doing. Jim said, "They [the guests] walked in and I started to talk to them, and that love of hospitality, that love of humans, flooded back into my life. And it really made me remember why I love hospitality so much. It's the people. Ever since then, I thank God that I was given an opportunity to revisit my roots and to find that human connection again, and to take a break from reports."



Minden Rec Center expands programs

AMBER McDOWD

Minden Press-Herald

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minden Rec Center is not only adapting but expanding its programs. "Right now we are looking at what the needs of Minden are recreationally," said Director Rocke Musgraves. "People are a little bit worried about going inside and being right next to people." In an effort to encourage both adults and the youth of Minden to lead more healthful lifestyles, the staff of the Rec are making changes to the facility and adding to the programs and classes available.

The weight room has been expand-

ed and relocated to a larger room, with more distance between sets of equipment. Thanks to some kind donations, the weight room now includes not only weight machines but free weights as well. They have installed gym flooring which helps absorb the shock of dropped weights. Treadmills and other cardio equipment are also available. Adults can workout and watch TV at the same time. "There's a lot of trash talking during football season," said Musgraves with a smile.

They are planning to add an additional fitness room upstairs which will be geared toward women. This area will hold the eight spin bikes available for the upcoming spin classes as well as televisions. There will also be a cable system to use with resistance bands. If the space allows, there may even be a pickleball court.

The indoor pool is used for water aerobics and range of motion exercises. The swim lane can also be reserved in thirty to sixty minute increments for swimming laps.

A range of adult classes including the Silver Sneakers chair aerobics, yoga, and hip hop dance class are offered.

Adult sports begin this spring with basketball, softball, and soccer leagues. Flag football is planned for the fall, and they're looking into ultimate frisbee too. Plans are also in the works to start tennis teams and a running club.

The idea is to offset seasons so adults don't have to choose between playing or watching their kids play. They are also trying to set up classes and programs so that parents can attend classes, lift weights, or do cardio while their kids are in sports practice.

The Minden Rec still offers the traditional youth programs such as basketball, football, soccer, and softball, but they are looking to expand the youth programs too.

"We have joined USA Football where we do a modified tackle," said Musgraves. This will probably begin late August. Tennis will also be available for youth. "We're looking to start a tennis program and are working with the middle school and high school coaches in the area," said Assistant Director Mike Aguilar. They hope to coordinate random matches on set days. Youth who want to play tennis outside of school often travel to Shreveport, "but we've got four courts right here," said Aguilar.

Tournaments bring many tourists into our city. "We are hosting the district round for softball this year in Minden," said Aguilar. "I'm putting a bid in to host the Pony-tails (it's 11-12 youth for girls) for the state tournament here in Minden."

"We're beginning to get a lot of requests for tournaments on our fields. A lot of softball tournaments, youth baseball tournaments. We're blowing up with that," said Director Musgraves. Musgraves also said, "I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Roderick Thomas and his crew and what a big part they play in getting the facility ready for events." He is also very grateful for the work Robert Sanders performs coordinating officials and games.

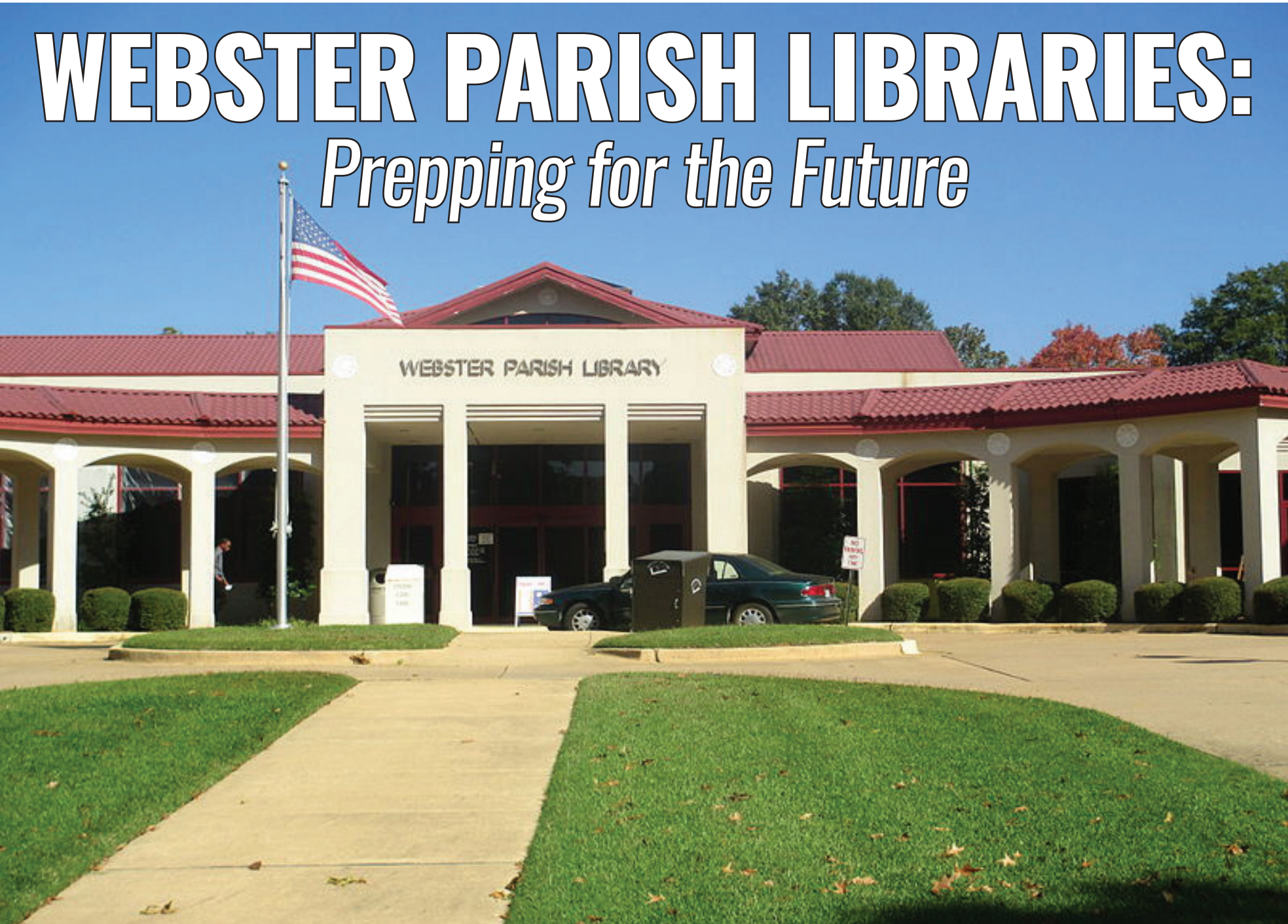
Adding flavor to these events is the new concessionaire. Mr. Musgraves said, "Our new concessionaire, Wild Thing, has become very popular. They've really added a nice touch to the overall atmosphere." The menu includes not only the usual hamburgers and such, but also pulled pork sandwiches, a variety of sausages, and street tacos. Occasionally they'll have a fish fry.

The Minden Rec has upgraded their systems as well. Now you can sign up online, access your account, and register for classes. The membership fee is only \$20 per year and this includes all the amenities. "We try to make it simple for everybody. We just want the citizens to come out and enjoy what we have," said Zita Williams, Event Coordinator and Rec Center employee for seventeen years.

"I'm so proud of our staff," said Musgraves. "They go above and beyond—not only with their time but sometimes with their money. They invest a lot in this place. They invest a lot in our youth and our adult programs. It's such a joy to be out here working with them."

Visit the Minden Rec online at www.mindenrec.org or in person at 1000 Recreational Drive in Minden.





WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald

In an effort to make its services more accessible to its patrons, the Webster Parish Library has recently launched their new app which can be downloaded at both the Android or Apple App stores.

The idea to create an app for the library system was spearheaded by the Webster Parish Library System’s Director, Savannah Jones, and brought to life through their Community Liaison/Marketing Director, Kim Sentell. The app will help patrons access collections and services such as booking a meeting space, viewing programs and events, or even learning a new skill in a user-friendly way.

“This innovative technology provides a contactless way to interact with the library. It uses a mobile-friendly catalog interface and puts our best electronic features all in one place. The app is not intended to replace our buildings or the website, but rather a way to have all the library information right at your fingertips. It’s a library-to-go,” said Sentell.

“The reason being is to make sure our library doesn’t get left behind as tech-

nology progresses. This is one way for us to bring our library more easily to our patrons,” said Jones.

“The build took a little over a year and a half to complete. Countless hours of work, but we wanted the best for our patrons.”

To go into details about some of the features the app provides, there is a new e-card available with the app that can be used in place of a library card. On top of that, the library partnered with library media streaming services such as Hoopla, Overdrive, and Canopy that will be available to patrons for free for three months after signing up for the e-card.

The app itself will also connect users to these services, making a seamless transition from discovering what eb-

ooks or audiobooks are available to reading/listening right on their phone.

The app also features an ISBN scanner, which can be used on the barcodes of books to see if they have them in stock at the library. So a user could be browsing books at a store, and look to see if the library had a copy before they make a purchase.

“Personally I think the biggest hit on the app will be the meeting room booking feature. Right now they have to come in or call to get a reservation for the meeting room, whereas now they can just do it from their phone,” said Jones.

The app will showcase the meeting rooms, the time slots that are available, as well as list equipment, such as laptops, that can be checked out during the use of the meeting space.

They will also feature a service called Printer On, which will allow users to print documents from anywhere to be picked up at the library.

“We were always mindful of putting forth our best efforts to ensure the features would best suit our patrons during the entire process. Even down to the smallest detail, we found ourselves re-searching the best color schemes we should use that are easiest on our patrons’ eyes when viewing the app,” said Sentell.

Be sure to check out the video tutorial on the Webster Parish Library’s website and Facebook page to see a more detailed presentation of the app and its many features. Patrons can download the Library System’s new app by going to the Android or Apple App Store and searching for ‘Webster Parish Libraries’ on their smart device.

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The Greater Minden Chamber understands that in order to have a strong economic environment you must have a strong community. We are truly blessed in our community to have leaders, business owners, educators and citizens who realize that we all share in the same responsibility of creating economic success and happiness for everyone. Our mission is to create the best business climate in Louisiana for our members. Together with our Board of Directors and community leaders, we strive to continually improve the quality of life for all residents in Minden and surrounding communities. We believe it is of great importance to invest in our future, and that investment begins with a strong business base .





Town and Country focuses on residents' needs

AMBER McDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

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 provide an ideal environment of care and first-class amenities. Located in a peaceful country setting, the facility's 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.

The staff has worked hard to handle the COVID-19 pandemic within their domain. They are currently recognized as having the highest rate of vaccination in the state for this type of facility with 90% of the staff fully vaccinated. The few without vaccinations were exempted due to either health issues or religious beliefs. They also have been working with Minden Medical Center and their local pharmacist to be able to provide both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines, by choice, to residents.

Their interdisciplinary team works together with each resident's doctor, therapist and other healthcare profes-

sionals to develop an individually designed specialized care plan to meet the specific needs of each resident. This plan is implemented by their dedicated and professional staff. The purpose of QAPI (Quality Assurance Performance Initiative) in their organization is to take

The residents enjoy daily activities with the Activity Department as well as field trips and shopping. Staff works with the local daycare to ensure that the residents are able to interact with the children as much as possible. They host holiday parades in the halls, show movies, and more.

a proactive approach to continually improving the way they care for and engage with their resident's, caregivers, and other partners. It's not just about existing—it's

about living. It's about living a life of dignity filled with faith and hope for the future. When it comes to quality, their dedicated staff makes the difference. Most residents are able to return home in two to three weeks.

Town and Country Health and Rehabilitation has a nurse practitioner on site and on call every day. They offer pet therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, RN infection preventionist, LPN infection preventionist, whirlpool therapy, RN coverage daily, certified wound care RN, skilled nursing care, RN's and LPN's daily, master social worker/patient advocate, regular physician visits, an in-house nurse practitioner, and a dietician to plan meals. Both private and semi-private rooms are available, and residents have access to the beauty/barber shop.

Town and Country has volunteers visiting with and participating in activities with the residents. The facility hosts several clubs for residents including Red Hats, Sportsmans Club, XYZ Club, and Cooking Club. Visit their Facebook page (Town & Country Health & Rehab) to see all the different activities.

The administrative staff are all from the local area, residing in Webster, Claiborne, and Bienville parishes. 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 that their needs are being met.

Upgrading Webster Parish Schools

Many schools have received renovations or additions

AMBER McDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

The Webster Parish School District is continuously upgrading and improving their facilities in our parish. Over the past year, many schools have received renovations or additions to their campuses.

Richardson Elementary and Jones Elementary both have new roofs as well as improved air conditioning and heating. The exterior windows and doors of both schools have been replaced with more attractive and energy efficient versions. The rejuvenated exteriors have made a big difference in the appearance of the buildings. "I'm really proud of the way they both turned out," said Jeff Franklin, Supervisor of Transportation and Maintenance.

A very popular upgrade with the teachers of Richardson and Jones has been the added faculty restrooms. Prior to this, there was a single restroom for staff located in the faculty lounge of each school. "We went in and added some faculty restrooms which, I can assure you, are a huge hit among the faculty," Franklin said.

Central Elementary also received some much needed improvements. They now have a new parking lot and driveway. The queue driveway was added to get waiting cars off the parish road. The new system is working wonderfully to keep everyone safe and the public roads clear.

Central also now has a fully renovated gym. "We've taken what was, essentially, an old metal building and completely redid the walls, the ceiling, the lights, and the bleachers and turned it into, what I consider, a very nice and attractive modern facility," said Franklin.

Lakeside Jr/Sr High also got improved parking lots and driveways. They will also be putting down synthetic turf on the football field soon.

Doyline High had their parking lot improved as well. The big news for Doyline, however, is their fully remodeled gym. They now enjoy a new gym floor, bleachers, and concession stand. The visitor's side dressing room and the public restrooms have been renovated. This gym was built in the 1940s, but now it looks part of the 21st century.

Minden High has just begun construction of their new multi-purpose building. This building will serve as an athletic facility for the whole school as well as a facility for the JROTC. The building will also contain six additional classrooms and an auxiliary gym. This auxiliary gym will be able to serve as a tornado shelter.

North Webster Junior High had new

lights and lighting panels installed in their baseball field and now have a contract to do renovations to their football stadium and dressing facilities.

Browning Elementary is in the planning stages for getting new restrooms, windows, and upgraded air conditioning and heating.

The renovations of these schools not only extends the "life" of the facilities, but also promotes pride in everyone involved. "I'll put our facilities up against any parish in the state. Especially our classrooms. We've got some great classroom facilities in Webster Parish," Franklin stated. Beyond this, the district is looking at the feasibility of doing some other projects in the future.

"I hope that it sends a good message to our citizens and taxpayers that we're trying to be good stewards of the monies that the taxpayers create for us," Superintendent Rowland said.





Construction begins on new MHS building



Central's new gym



New windows & doors at Richardson



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FIRSTMINDEN

Meadowview a cornerstone of Minden's economy

AMBER McDOWD
Minden Press-Herald

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, home-like 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. We are led by our administrator Rebecca Myles, a Minden native and recipient of the 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 healthcare 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.

Bronze Commitment to Quality Award:

Our facility is proud to be recognized by the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living as a recipient of their Bronze Commitment to Quality Award. The program honors facilities across the nation that have demonstrated their commitment to improving quality care for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Mission:

Nexion Health is committed to being the leading provider of short-term and long-term care services in each community that we operate. We

- Provide compassionate, responsible health care to our residents
- 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

Skilled & Compassionate Care Team:

Staff that you or your loved one might interact with includes

- Administrator
- Director of Nursing
- Business Office Manager
- Marketing Director & Admissions Coordinator
- Social Services
- Activities Director
- Nurses & CNAs
- Rehab Therapists
- Respiratory Therapists



Competent Clinical Team:

Our clinical team takes care of the short and long term needs of our residents

- trach care and I.V. certified staff
- individualized pain management
- total parenteral nutrition (TPN) and peritoneal dialysis
- chronic disease management and education, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), congestive heart failure (CHF) and pneumonia
- specialized rehabilitation services: physical, occupational 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.

Ventilator Dependent Unit:

- Designed with state-of-the-art technology.
- Each room offers an in-wall 100% O2 delivery system, in-wall suctioning and a portable ventilator
- All our beds have either pressure reduction or low air loss mattresses to aid in the reduction of pressure-related problems.

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:

Rehabilitation services—including physical, occupational, and speech therapy—take place in the 3,000 square foot rehab gymnasium.

Rehabilitation therapy treats numerous conditions, including

- amputation
- arthritis
- balance disorders
- brain injury
- chronic pain
- contractures
- diabetes
- edema
- hand/upper extremity impairments
- lymphedema
- multiple sclerosis
- orthopedics
- orthopedic care for patients who have injuries or undergone joint replacement surgery
- osteoporosis
- outpatient therapy
- Parkinson's disease
- respiratory disorders (ie: CHF and COPD)
- shoulder and back injuries
- spinal cord injury
- sports injury
- stroke

Long-Term Care:

Admissions are accepted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 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.

- 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

Activities:

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

- Featured Activity Events include
- Traditional bingo
- Spiritual groups
- Lunch outings
- Local sporting events
- A Year of Wellness
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- Talent shows
- White Dove Memorial Services
- Birthday parties and even Weddings
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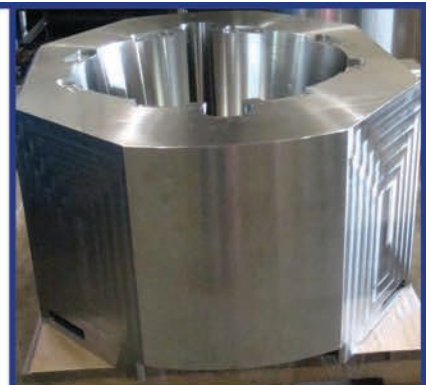
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LIVING *Profile* 2022

Inspiring A Community: Cultural Crossroads



PHOTO GALLERY ▲

WILL PHILLIPS

Minden Press-Herald

The Cultural Crossroads Board held a Cultural Products District Meet & Greet at The Farm as an opportunity for people as well as community leaders to come out and see what Minden's Designation as a Cultural Products District could mean for the City.

"We've had our cultural products district designation for close to fifteen years, since Patty Odom was the Main Street Director. But we never had any events or anything in a really long time. There has never really been a collaborative effort to utilize it the way it's intended to be utilized," said Elaine Eaton, President of the Cultural Crossroads Board.

"Ultimately that's my goal with this, and why I wanted everyone to come to the table, so that The Cultural Crossroads can be a part of that conversation, so we can come together and help each other out with our various events."

This designation as a Cultural Products District has its advantages, including access to grants and tax credits, as well as being part of a network of cities around Louisiana that all aim to foster their local arts.

Kelsea McCrary, Director of Civic Design in Cultural Districts in the Louisiana Division of the Arts explains, "The program focuses on arts and culture as econom-

ic recovery, economic development, sparking revitalization. Minden is one of 115 Cultural Districts in 41 parishes and 71 towns. When you become a cultural district you gain access to historic tax credits to try and help revitalize your historic buildings that qualify. You also can allow your artists to exempt original artwork that qualifies from the local sales tax rate."

"So it's a marketing incentive, but more than that you gain access to our office, technical assistance, and other resources you can apply for such as grants or project assistance. We can connect you to other agencies that are part of our family, but you also get me, so you get a relationship with the Louisiana Division of the Arts and you get connectivity to these other cultural districts. So all the Elaines and Mahalla's of the world come together and get to share ideas, resources, contacts, and things like that."

Ultimately, the goal of this program is to aid economic growth by giving places the tools necessary to better support and grow their local arts scene. There is perhaps no better example of the good that investing in the arts can do than Chris Batton, The Cultural Crossroads Cultured Pearl Scholarship Recipient. "He has been here since he was little. He was taught by Chris Broussard, our founder, and consecutively was taught by Jennifer Heard, so he grew up here in a way," said Eaton.

Unexpectedly during the event, Batton asked for a moment to make a surprise presentation, during which

he revealed that he and his mother had decided to donate \$1000 to The Cultural Crossroads for the years that they supported him as well as to honor the memory of his late father, O.B. Batton Jr.

"My father, he was a bit of an artist himself. He liked to draw old model vehicle trucks. He lived in the country in Claiborne Parish. He was just the most chilliest, understanding father. He always supported my art," said Batton.

"I'm thankful to have been with Cultural Crossroads since I was eight or so. Me and my mom, we wanted to contribute. We thought about the art and Cultural Crossroads, and we wanted to contribute for the years they supported me and my artwork. So we talked about it and we decided that we wanted to give a contribution to them to help out."

"I know he would've liked that," Batton said, referring to his late father.

Eaton expressed after receiving the donation, "I was astonished that he did that. It was so generous and meaningful. I truly say this without reservation. He is one of the kindest, cutest, sweetest people you could ever meet. He might as well have given us a million dollars, because of how meaningful that was."

The impact that the Cultural Crossroads had in Batton's life highlights the importance of investing into local arts programs. "If we could touch more lives like that, then everything we do is absolutely worth it," said Eaton.



Anne Claire Lemoine Crowned Miss Minden 2022

WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald

This year at the Miss Minden Pageant, seventeen-year-old Glenbrook senior Anne Claire Lemoine was crowned 2022's Miss Minden. In the talent portion of the competition, she was able to wow both the judges and audience with her dance routine, a skill she has developed throughout 15 years of dance. She is a member of the Senior Elite competition team at Cydni's School of Dance and has received awards including numerous dance convention scholarships, CSD Dancer of the Year, and the leading role in 2021 CSD ballet, Moana. At Glenbrook, Claire is a co-captain of the Varsity Cheer team, an honors student, and a member of the National Honor Society. This year's Miss Minden was not Lemoine's first experience in the world of pageantry. In 2021 Anna Claire was selected as Webster Parish Fair Queen and as Apache Spirit Princess for the Glenbrook homecoming court. Shortly after being crowned Miss Minden 2022, Lemoine stated, "It was honestly insane. I started out in the Miss Minden organization as a teen, and just being able to come back and win Miss Minden and be able to give back to my community as well as encourage other girls to step into the Miss America and Miss Louisiana Organization, is just an absolutely humbling experience."



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Project Reclaim

WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald

A local nonprofit is putting some generous donations to good use this summer. Project Reclaim is a leadership institute that aims to help the youth of Minden and the surrounding area by working with them, educating them, and helping them to develop new skills and interests.

"We're trying to empower our young people to stay in school, from one grade level to the next, stay out of involvement in teen pregnancy, and stay out of involvement in juvenile court. We think if young people can reach those kinds of benchmarks in their lives, then they can be successful," said Ron Anderson of Project Reclaim, "The goal is to create the best young citizens that we can, who

see the value in giving back to the community."

This summer, charitable donations from businesses in the surrounding area have helped enable Project Reclaim to start teaching new skills to its members. "b1BANK donated eight computers for our use and Basic Matrix out of Shreveport donated some laptops. Ascend Math out of Shreveport, a man by the name of Kevin Briley, donated a license and set up Project Reclaim as a school to use his educational software program. We feel blessed that Kevin Briley, b1BANK, and Ascend Math would do that for us because it's just taken our program to another level."

Ascend Math is a learning program that takes an initial assessment of the kids' capabilities and then gives them progressively more difficult math assignments in order to help them progress in math at a rate that is unique to the individual.

"The math scores for students in Louisiana are not good at all. So I saw the value in trying to really bolster our kids' ability in the mathematical arena," said Anderson.

However, math is not the only education experience Project Reclaim students are receiving, according to Anderson. "We're trying to expose our young people to experiential learning, you learn by doing. So we want to really find out what they're interested in and try to get them interested in some other areas that maybe they've never considered," he said.

One of the things Project Reclaim has recently started doing is teaching the students about videography. "Lloyd Davis Jr., a local videographer, teaches our kids videography. Last week he started teaching the kids how to use the editing software, so they can learn to edit videos that they take. What we want to do is to get their interests piqued

in doing other things. Kids are media-driven, they love operating the camera equipment, they love doing the videos, so they need to know some of the dynamics that go into that, not just the application. We just want to further their knowledge in that area," said Anderson.

A few of the members of Project Reclaim were kind enough to share their experiences and what they've learned during their time there. "My experience here is that Project Reclaim is a place that helps get you ready for the real world and teaches you how to be a leader. You can always be a leader if you follow a good leader. If you follow a good leader, they may teach you things that you may wanna teach another person," said Sha'nya Levy, 13. She also said, "I learned that no matter what people think, there's no one in the world like you."

"I used to have trouble talking to people and getting to

know people. Project Reclaim has helped me get better at introducing myself to people and talking to people," said Darnell Morris, 12.

"I want to say that Project Reclaim is a good leadership institute. It helps young people to become better leaders and become a better leader for the community. The summer program is great and interesting and it's a great place to learn. It's made me more eager to get out and to help people and to stand up for what's right. It's just a great opportunity," said Shemarrera Canley, 17.

"We try to do things to reach out to young people in the community, to help them to be the best they can, and we think that by doing that we make Minden a better place. I'm grateful for the support that we're getting from the Minden community. You don't do this kind of work by yourself," said Anderson.



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LOCAL HERO:

Interview with Lt. Toika Whiting-Harrison

WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald


During a late Wednesday night last June, the Minden Police Department was alerted about a suicidal man threatening to jump off of the LA 371 overpass overlooking I-20. Two officers arrived on scene while other officers closed off I-20 temporarily. Officers witnessed the man standing over the edge screaming that he wanted to kill himself.

The officers were able to convince the man to pull a leg back over the edge,

however, after that point he refused to budge but asked specifically to speak with Lt. Tokia Whiting-Harrison, knowing her from his time as a student and her time as a School Resource Officer.

“He let them know they wouldn’t talk to anybody but me,” said Harrison. “It was one of my former students.”


Even though she was off duty at the time, she arrived in less than ten minutes. “I just wanted to get there and make sure that we could get the help that was needed for him. They trusted me to be there for them, so I know they trusted



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me for a reason," said Harrison.

Minden Police Chief Steve Cropper spoke of Lt. Harrison and her work as well, saying, "I got a call last night letting me know what was going on, and they told me that they had reached out to Lt. Harrison because it was the only person they would talk to. I was getting up out of the bed and before I could even get out of the house the phone rang back and she had already arrived at the scene and was able to take him down."

"She is pretty impressive, she has a great relationship with everyone she deals with. I wish I had about ten officers like her."

After arriving on scene, her presence alone was enough to coax the man from the edge. "They were still showing that they were upset. Then I called their name, and they realized I was there. I stayed in the middle to make sure I didn't go towards the edge, so he would have to come off the edge towards me. As soon as I got up and called his name, and he realized that it was me and I was there, he calmed down a little bit, was still upset, but from what he was, and came over to me in the middle of the highway," said Harrison.

This is emblematic of Harrison's work as a School Resources Officer, and the bonds that she builds with her students. "One of the best attributes of Lt. Toika Harrison is the fact that she builds authentic relationships with people. People know they can trust her, in the good times and in the bad times. Like so many

here in Minden, this young man knew that Toika would be there for him, like she's here for us too," said Becky Wilson, MHS Principal.

After coming over the barrier, the in-

dividual got into Lt. Harrison's unit and was then transported to Minden Medical Center to receive medical care.

"Once I got him in my unit and got to have a conversation with him, I knew

then that everything was going to be ok, and stayed with him once he got to the hospital for a few hours, to let him know that I was going to be there for him like I told him I was."





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How Minden got chosen for HGTV's Home Town Kickstart

It was recently announced that Minden had been selected as one of the six small towns to be featured in the upcoming season of Home Town Kickstart, a new renovation series slated to premiere in spring 2022. HGTV personalities supported by Home Town stars Ben and Erin Napier will lead three projects in each town: refresh the home of a local hero, give a small business a beautiful upgrade and reinvigorate a public space to enhance the residents' quality of life and engender community pride.

So how did this opportunity come about for the City of Minden? Sara McDaniel along Rachel Miller are both residents who had a knack for restoring old properties. In fact, the two initially met when Miller shared her preferred contractors when McDaniel initially purchased the dilapidated McDonald Street Home.

However, their knack for revitaliza-

tion didn't stop at their homes. They along with graphic designer and local resident Patrick Miller can be credited for the creation of the recent murals that have gone up in Downtown Minden.

Applying to Home Town Kickstart is another one of their successful ventures. "Rachel Miller got that ball rolling, and she sent the initial letter of inquiry to the network, and almost immediately we got a response from the casting director, and she said we would love to have Minden apply," said McDaniel.

Applying for the show meant independently producing their own small



show about why Minden should be selected. "Two years ago Rachel and I got in gear, and with the help of Patrick Miller, who is a graphic designer, and her two children, who have helped us with drone and video footage, we, in essence, produced a little television show about Minden," said McDaniel.

However, the first time they applied was actually two years ago, where unfortunately Minden lost out to another town from Alabama. "We were super sad. We were devastated, but we were like that's ok. We learned a lot about us,

about Minden in the process, so we're going to continue this dream that we have," said McDaniel.

"This summer, we get wind that HGTV Hometown is casting for another season. So we re-applied, again. Had to go through and produce a whole nother TV show about Minden. And we all know the rest of the story, we got it this time."

Towns featured by brands such as HGTV and People get boons to their local economy, both from the money spent by the television crews while they're in town, but most notably from the tourism that comes as a result of the added visibility.

"They are seeing an influx of tourists into those towns that are coming to see these spaces that HGTV promotes. That increases your occupancy taxes, your sales taxes, it might increase our property values. So we are so so excited to have them coming to our town," said McDaniel.

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Thanks Community for Overwhelming Support of Bike Drive

WILL PHILLIPS

Minden Press-Herald

Thanks to the community support given to the We Care Bike Drive, not a single child who attended the event Saturday afternoon was left without a bike. The organizer of the drive, Patrick White, thanks all of the individuals, businesses, and organizations who stepped up to help with the event.

The event took place at Academy Park with bikes lining its tennis court waiting to be given away. Minden Police Department officers were present to assist in handing out the free pizza and drinks provided to all guests, as well as the bicycles themselves.

While initially a raffle was planned to give the bikes, it turned out that the drive had risen more than enough to outfit every child there with a bicycle and leave no one wanting.

Patrick White started an organization a short while ago called We Care that aims to make connections in the community between those that want to help and those that need it. This year he organized their first annual bike drive, with the goal of giving bikes to kids in the community to let them know that there are people out there who care about them.

Initially White had set a goal of raising twenty-five bikes to give away. We Care quadrupled that goal, raising over 100 bikes to give away.

"It feels amazing. It feels justified. It's just proving the point that I set out to prove. That there is still love out there in the community. That people still love each other regardless of any situation. Regardless of any barriers that they try to put between us, or anything they try to influence our minds with," said White. "There is nothing that conquers love. It's out there, now I'm just asking that we show it."

White gave some special thanks to some other groups, organizations, and individuals that helped him to make the drive such a success.

"I've got to send my first shout out to Mercy's Closet. My heart goes out to them and everything that they're doing. They need more support right now. People need to actually call and see what she needs," said White.

"Living Word. They reached out to me not only with help but also information, knowledge, and encouragement."

"Hilltop Storage. They're amazing. They love the community, and love the kids so much. What he's done, it



can't be repeated, it can't be duplicated," said White.

"Alice's Soul Food. She said God put it on her heart to come in big and do big things. And she did it big, helped get it to where it is."

"Lawanda Jefferson, she teaches first aid and CPR. She stepped up big with a couple of bicycles. She's also offering free first aid and CPR classes for the youth."

We Care would also like to offer special thanks to their sponsors: Platinum - Mercy's Closet;

Gold - Alice's Soul Kitchen, Best Kare Journey & Staff, Hilltop Storage, Living Word Church, Saint Rest Church, the Marshal's Office;

Silver - Al Lewis, Benevolent Funeral Home, Brown's Dodge & Staff, Carroway Auto, Chad Auto & Exhaust, Chief Cropper, Chris Broussard, Divine Services, Doyle Funeral Home, Harris' Corner, Her's Bridal, Lawanda Jefferson's First Aid & CPR Classes, McClung's Service, Minden Medical, Mt. Pilgrim Church, Roma's Italian Bistro, Russell Brown, the Jefferson Family, Waller Petroleum, Water Tree;



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"I thank them. They are the ones that made this possible. And with that being said, let's continue to make it possible because it's a step-by-step process, and we're taking those steps right now to actually change these kids' mindsets and lives. The more bikes we have, the more lives we touch. The more lives we touch, the more it can spread," said White.

"We're planting a seed of love inside their minds and inside their hearts. And the more that we nourish it, the more it will spread. They'll take that seed and bring it to others, and show them how to love as well."

MINDEN ST. JUDE AUCTION ▼

\$2,415,317

That's how much the Minden St. Jude Auction raised this year!



WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald

The Minden St. Jude Auction came back bigger and better than ever this year, raising a whopping \$2,415,317 for the Children's Research Auction over the course of the event's four days, outpacing previous years' records by nearly a million dollars.

A large part of setting this year's record so far above and beyond was due to the late Alford Davis who generously donated a hefty sum of \$674,072 in his will to the Minden St. Jude Auction, the largest single donation the auction has ever received. As a token of gratitude, the organizers of Minden St. Jude dedicated this weekend to the life and memory of Mr. Davis.

This year also saw the return of the beloved Chili Cook-Off. While the weather was not ideal, the head cooks and their teams persevered and the chili enthusiasts came out in stride, raising \$8,200 for St. Jude, which translates to roughly 1,640 chili tasting cups sold.

The winners for the St. Jude Chili Cookoff are as follows. In the main competition the judges selected Big Jon's Big Eats with Head Cook Jon Roger with Team Member Nancy Roger as the winners for the 2022 St. Jude Chili Cookoff. The winner of Best in Show was "Bayou Boujee" with Brooke Smith as Head Cook and Team Members Lacy Berry and Kathy Dick. For People's Choice the public voted for Heat Stroke with Head Cook Tyler Mandino as their chosen winner.

Early Saturday morning runners from all around gathered in the First Baptist parking lot to take part in either the 5k, 10k, Half-marathon, or Fun Run. The 5k and Fun Run were accompanied by color throws, painting the participants in all manner of vibrant colors before and during the run.

The Male 5K winners were Nathan Vogel with a time of 17:29 in first place, Tyler Davis with a time of 19:49 in second place, and Jairo Aguinaga with a time of 20:01 in third place. Aguinaga chose to donate his winnings back to the auction.

The Female 5K winners were Isabelle Russell with a time of 20:24 in first place, Vivian Still with a time of 22:42 in second place, and Avery Dixon with a time of 24:31 in third place.

The Male 10K winners were Jack Eaton with a time of 38 minutes in first place, Heath Hunt with a time of 41:54 in second place, and Kailon Caldwell with a time of 43:56 in third place.

The Female 10k winners were Linzie Hebert with a time of 43:24 in first place, Angel Turnbow with a time of 44:15 in second place, and Crystal Gantt with a time of 46:47 in third place.

The Male Half Marathon winners were Brandon Graham with a time of 1:15:07 in first place, Joshua Acosta with a time of 1:19:41 in second place, and Cameron O'Reilly with a time of 1:29:13 in third place.

The Female Half Marathon winners were Alexandra Hall with a time of 1:22:26 in first place, Shelley Armstrong with a time of 1:30:00 in second place, and Allison Mayfield with a time of 1:31:01 in third place.

The winners for the four team categories are as follows. Social Team went to Calendar Tribe, School Team went to Glenbrook Apaches, Church Team went to Trinity United Methodist, and Business Team went to Minden Family Dental.

Last year's auction unfortunately had cutbacks that had to be made to adhere to safety precautions for the pandemic, but even last year, Minden's giving spirit was on full display. This year, with nothing holding them back, the Minden St. Jude Auction was able to become a relentless force for good, raising over two million dollars for the hospital. This feat was only possible due to the countless hours and hard work donated by the auction's volunteers, as well as generous contributions in the form of raffles, pledges, donations, and of course bids from all who tuned in either live or in person and, as a result, Minden once again showcased what can be accomplished when people work together for the greater good.





Chiefs' Star JJ Sneed gives back to Minden at E.S. Richardson Elementary

JOSH BEAVERS

Special to the Minden Press-Herald

JJ Sneed, Minden High grad and current Kansas City Chiefs star, was in back in town last May giving back to the community that gave him so much.

Sneed sponsored an event at Richardson Elementary where students could play games, win prizes, enjoy sno-cones and fist bump the NFL defensive back.

"This is just something I wanted to do to give back," Sneed said. "I didn't have something like this growing up, and I have been blessed. I wanted to pass that blessing on."

Michelle Finley, Richardson's principal, said the Minden native reached out recently and told her what he wanted to do. "It just speaks to the kind of young man JJ is," she said. "He just wanted to do something nice for these kids and he is able to do so. You see how happy they are?" She pointed to the smiling faces of the kids playing games and looking up to the former Minden Crimson Tider. "They love this."

In February, 2021, JJ started in the Super Bowl against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Tom Brady and Devin White, another Webster Parish native. Though the Chiefs came up short, JJ said the experience was phenomenal.

"It's so hard to make it to the Super Bowl," he said. "We

came up short but we're going to get right back out there next season and fight to get back."

Sneed was selected by the Chiefs in the fourth round with the 138th overall pick in the 2020 NFL Draft.

After playing wide receiver for Minden High School, Sneed committed to Louisiana Tech in 2016. He converted to cornerback at Tech and saw playing time in his true

freshman season, highlighted by an interception return touchdown against Western Kentucky in the Conference USA Championship Game. He started about half the games at corner during his sophomore season before moving into a permanent starting role his junior season. He moved to free safety before his senior season and was named second-team all-CUSA after the season.

In his rookie season with the Chiefs, JJ tallied two -consecutive games with a sack during Week 15 and 16. He also recorded two -consecutive postseason games with a sack in the AFC Divisional Round and the AFC Championship game.

With three interceptions in 2020, he tied 13 other Chiefs players who recorded three interceptions during their rookie season, tying for the 10th-most INTs by a rookie in franchise history. Sneed's three interceptions were tied for the most among NFL rookies last season. In his NFL debut against Houston, JJ recorded his first -career

interception, picking off Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson and returning the ball 39 yards to Houston's 17-yard line.

He was named to the Pro Football Writers Association (PFWA) All-Rookie Team as a cornerback following his rookie season.



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Glenbrook celebrates Homecoming with 42-8 win

T. SCOTT BOATRIGHT
Minden Press-Herald
October 16, 2021

No head coach, no problem.

The Glenbrook Apaches weren't about to let anything spoil their Homecoming celebration, as they showed Friday night by blasting past Plain Dealing 42-8 at Apaches Stadium.

Glenbrook head coach David Feaster was suspended for Friday's game after reportedly being ejected by game officials late in last week's contest at Haynesville.

The Apaches responded by scoring on their first three drives against Plain Dealing to build a 21-0 advantage over the Tigers only 2:43 into the second quarter.

"We came out knowing we had faced a lot of adversity knowing about Coach Feaster's situation," said Glenbrook defensive coordinator James Thurman. "It was a short week — we were out Monday and Tuesday. It was Homecoming week. There were a lot of distractions we faced and we knew we needed to start strong."

Plain Dealing opened the game by recovering an onsidies kick and then driving all the way down to the Glenbrook 22-yard line before turning the ball over on downs.

A 23-yard pass from Ty Feaster to Casson Clemons followed by a 22-yard pass from Feaster to DJ Carter and then another 11-yard pass to Clemons set the Apaches up at the Tigers' 14-yard line before Feaster ran around right end to put Glenbrook up 6-0 at the 6:24 mark of the opening stanza after a bad snap spoiled the extra point kick attempt.

After allowing Plain Dealing only one first down on the ensuing drive, Glenbrook took over on its own 40. A 31-yard pass from Feaster to Clemons pushed the Apaches near the red zone before Turner McClelland took the ball around the right end and raced 23 yards to paydirt and a 14-0 lead for GHS with 56 seconds remaining in the first quarter after Carter ran in the two-point conversion.

The Apaches then held Plain Dealing to a three-and-out series before a 56-yard pass from Feaster to Chase Sentell set the Apaches at the Tigers' nine-yard line.

After Carter was hauled down deep behind the line of scrimmage on first



down, Feaster and Clemons connected again, this time on a 18-yard scoring strike that put Glenbrook up 21-0 with 9:17 left in the first half.

Glenbrook again held Plain Dealing without a first down on the ensuing drive before a 48-yard from Feaster to Clemons set up a one-yard plunge to paydirt by Carter to push the Apaches' advantage to 28-0 at the 6:09 mark of the second quarter.

Plain Dealing looked like it would punt from its own 42 on its next drive but went for the fake, with the punter looking like he was going to pass before dropping the ball to the turf, where a gang of Apaches' pounced on it.

Then a 19-yard scamper by Carter set up a one-yard touchdown run by Collin Gregg with 1:17 left in the half sent the Apaches into the locker room at intermission with a 35-0 lead.

The second half breezed by as fast as the chilly wind that began blowing from the north as running clock made it an early night for both teams.

Plain Dealing opened the second half by driving the ball all the way to the Glenbrook 24 before a Maddox Mandino interception turned the ball over to the Apaches.

Carter's 45-yard run sparked a five-play, 73-yard scoring drive for Glenbrook that culminated with Tre Kent outracing everyone to the left pylon on a 15-yard scoring scamper that gave the Apaches their final score at the 2:33 mark of the third quarter.

Plain Dealing drove 68-yards on its final possession, scoring on a seven-yard pass and two-point conversion pass

with 3:49 remaining on that running clock.

While admitting that a Homecoming shut-out would have been nice, Thurman said he felt that the fact that the Apaches played every player who dressed was more important.

"To me, getting those younger guys playing time was much more important than getting the goose-egg," Thurman said.

Feaster finished with 257 passing yards while also handing the ball off to eight Glenbrook rushers, with Carter leading the way with 62 yards on five carries.

Glenbrook, now 5-2 overall and 3-2 in District 1-1A, will next play host to winless Ringgold, which forfeited this week's game to North Caddo, at Apaches Stadium next Friday night.

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Crimson Tide outfights Knights, 34-27

T. SCOTT BOATRIGHT

Minden Press-Herald
September 18, 2021

The battle for Webster Parish gridiron bragging rights came down to a heavy-weight slugfest with both teams trading punches from start to finish, with both at points gaining upper hands and both suffering near knockouts before climbing back up on their feet.

In the end, Minden High School outlasted North Webster as the Crimson Tide held on for a 34-27 win over the Knights at WW Williams Stadium.

North Webster landed the first big blows, building an early 13-0 advantage on a 63-yard pass to tight end Jantareon Robinson and then recovering an on-sides kick and marching down to score on a five-yard scoring scamper by Cooper Sanders.

But the Crimson Tide picked themselves up off the mat and countered with a flurry of scoring punches, with quarterback Andrew Cooper scoring on a 13-yard run, Zedekiah Harris adding a five-yard touchdown run and Cooper

connecting with Jaylin Williams on a 25-yard strike to make it 21-13 in Minden's favor with 54 seconds remaining in the first half.

"It was two good teams going at it, showing a lot of good defense and offense," said Minden coach Spencer Heard. "I'm proud of the way our guys just continued to battle, especially after facing early adversity, getting behind but fighting back until the end."

But then it was North Webster's turn to counterpunch, and the Knights did just that with a 35-yard scoring strike from quarterback Collin McKenzie to Sanders that after a two-point conversion by McKenzie tied the game up at 21-21 with 35 seconds left before halftime.

Momentarily it looked like a late jab by the Crimson Tide would send Minden into the locker room with a halftime advantage as Cooper hit Thornton on a long scoring strike as time expired, but the play was called back due to an illegal man downfield flag.

"It was a tough, hard-fought ballgame," said North Webster coach John Ware. "Hats off to Minden. They did what they needed to do to win. We made some good plays and we kept plugging away the whole game, but in the end



they just made more plays than we did."

The Tide poured it on early in the second half, with Cooper racing 51 yards for a score 52 seconds into the third quarter to put Minden on top 28-21. Minden's Harris scored on a nine-yard run early at the 10:27 mark of the fourth stanza that put the Tide up 34-21.

But this time it was the Knights' turn to try to rally back from behind.

McKenzie scored his second rushing TD with 2:47 remaining to cut the Minden lead to six points before the Knight's held the Tide to a three-and-out series, forcing a punt that gave the Knights a late scoring chance.

But Minden's Isaiah Thornton, who scored on a pick six during last week's win over Green Oaks, landed the last big punch against North Webster as he intercepted a pass to secure the win for the Tide. "He's really stepped up and had

a solid senior year so far playing on both sides of the ball," Heard said of Thornton. "He's making some big plays in the defensive secondary and I'm very proud of Isaiah and what he's been able to do so far this year."

Minden totaled 340 yards of total offense — 295 on the ground — while North Webster tallied 308 yards of offense with 143 coming through the air.

"Going into it we knew it was probably going to come down to the battle along the front lines. They confused us some up front with some of the stuff they were doing that we weren't used to seeing. We had a lot more missed assignments up front because of that, and they're pretty good up front."

Minden (2-1) hits the road for the first time this season next week as the Tide plays at Mansfield while North Webster (2-1) will be at home against Jena (2-1).

'Pick Six' pushes Crimson Tide past Patriots

T. SCOTT BOATRIGHT

Minden Press-Herald
November 6, 2021

Defense has played a big role for the Minden Crimson Tide football team all season long.

And it did so again Friday night, as Isaiah Thornton's 99-yard "Pick Six" interception return followed by Cole Barnett's extra point kick with 5:29 remaining proved to be the difference as Minden earned a 35-34 victory at Franklin Parish.

The Crimson Tide finished the regular season at 4-6 and will learn its postseason fate when the Louisiana High School Athletic Association announces its 2021 playoff brackets on Sunday.

Running back Daylen Robinson played his usual big role in the Minden, rushing for 96 yards and three scores on 26 car-

ries, including a two-yard scoring scamper that gave the Crimson Tide an early 7-0 lead at the 5:50 mark of the opening stanza.

But Franklin Parish countered by scoring three touchdowns over a 2:02 span shortly after to build a big lead of its own.

The Patriots went on top 8-7 on a one-yard run by Jacob Caldwell followed by a successful two-point conversion pass with 1:50 left in the first quarter before Franklin Parish's Josh Caldwell returned a fumble 45 yards for a score that put FPHS up 14-7 with 22 seconds left in the opening period.

After forcing a quick Minden punt on the ensuing series, Franklin Parish's Chris Baker broke loose on a 54-yard dash to paydirt that pushed the Patriots' lead to 20-7 at the 11:48 mark of the second quarter.

But the Tide rolled back, scoring on a six-yard run by Robinson before Minden quarterback Andrew Cooper fired a 10-

yard scoring strike to Cameron Mitchell to knot things up at 20-20 (after missing the first extra point kick attempt) with 1:30 left in the first half.

Franklin Parish battled back and took a 28-20 halftime lead after quarterback Bryce Curtis hit Marshawn Whitley on an 11-yard touchdown pass followed by a two-point conversion pass to Eli Foster with 19 seconds remaining before intermission.

The back-and-forth scoring see-saw continued in the second half as Minden tied things up again at 28-28 as Daylen Robinson scored on a four-yard run before running in for the two-point conversion at the 6:10 mark of the third quarter.

Franklin Parish didn't waste any time regaining a lead as Curtis hit Javion White on a 77-yard bomb that put the Patriots back on top 34-28 5:19 left in the third period before Thornton's fourth-quarter heroics gave the Tide the comeback win.



Camp Minden to host ASA archery competition over next 10 years

T. SCOTT BOATRIGHT

Minden Press-Herald
November 8, 2021

It's a bull's eye for Camp Minden, Webster Parish and north Louisiana as a whole. A press conference spearheaded by the Shreveport Bossier Sports Commission held Friday at Camp Minden announced that Camp Minden will host an annual Archery Association Pro/Am competition at Camp Minden for the next 10 years.

Archers from across the country will pay entry fees based on their competitive division in both professional and amateur classes and aim for cash prizes, trophies and points toward the prestigious "Shooter of the Year" award in their class.

The first Easton/Hoyt Pro/Am event will be held at Camp Minden from April 21-24 of 2022.

"People will see what northern



Louisiana has to offer," said Mike Walsworth of the Louisiana Lieutenant Governor's Office of North-

ern Louisiana Outreach.

Kelly Wells, Executive Director of the Shreveport Bossier Sports Com-

mission appeared with members of the Bossier and Webster parish police juries, mayors of Bossier City and Minden, the Camp Minden National Guard Commander training site, representatives from tourism and convention agencies, and a representative from the Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser at the press conference.

The touted an economic impact to Webster, Bossier and Caddo parishes of up to \$3 million a year.

"The Archery Shooters Association has been conducting national 3-D Pro/Am archery events for over 25 years," said Michael Tyrell, President of the Archery Shooters Association, LLC. solid business decision. We have been working closely with the Shreveport-Bossier City Sports Commission for over two years to find a venue having already determined that the community has all of the hotel rooms, restaurants, and local support we will ever need."

Lakeside falls in defensive slugfest

T. SCOTT BOATRIGHT

Minden Press-Herald
October 30, 2021

SIBLEY — Friday night's District 2-1A showdown between Lakeside and D'Arbonne Woods seemed to breeze by as fast as the brisk winds blew across north Louisiana earlier in the day,

But a game based 95% offensively on the run played a big part in that as the clock was stopped only a handful of times following the rare incomple-

In the end, D'Arbonne Woods downed the Warriors 15-12 in a defensive showdown featuring hard-nosed running and even harder-hitting tackling.

It all boiled down to the last quarter and a half, when the two teams exchanged leads before late defensive stands by the Timberwolves secured the win.

Trailing 7-6 midway through the third quarter, the Warriors threw a haymaker punch in the form of a one-yard quarterback sneak by CJ Watts. But Kris Redden's two-point conversion run attempt was stopped at the goal line, leaving Lakeside on top 12-7.

Things kept going Lakeside's way early in the final stanza as D'Arbonne Woods drove deep before the Warriors forced a fumble and recovered it to take back over at their own 16-yard line with 11:11 remaining in the game.

The Timberwolves' defense didn't allow a first

down on the ensuing drive, and the Warriors came out on fourth-and-five from their own 21 with Jacob Whitehead taking the snap in the shotgun formation before attempting a quick kick.

But the punt was blocked and Timberwolves took over at the Lakeside 22-yard line with 9:51 remaining.

The Timberwolves Gavin Rawls took the handoff on

the ensuing play and the big running back burst up the middle barely touched on a 22-yard scoring scamper that put D'Arbonne Woods on top 15-12 with 9:45 left on the clock following a successful two-point conversion run.

A short kickoff and solid return by Ashton Stewart set the Warriors up with good field position at their own 48-yard line before a 25-yard pushed Lakeside into the red zone at the D'Arbonne Woods 13-yard line.

But the D'Arbonne Woods defense tightened at that point, thanks in part to a holding penalty against the Warriors, and on fourth-and-eight at the Timberwolves' 12, Watts looked like he was going to run before quickly stopping, pulling up and lofting a pass toward the end zone.

But the receiver was well-covered and the pass attempt fell to the field, giving the Timberwolves' possession with 4:53 remaining.

Long runs by Rawls and Timberwolves' quarterback Regan Walker helped D'Arbonne Woods chew up the clock with a long drive into the red zone.

Lakeside had one last chance to get the ball back with 53 seconds remaining, but the Timberwolves converted and Walker only had to kneel twice as time expired and D'Arbonne Woods escaped with the win.

Stewart scored Lakeside's other touchdown on a 60-plus yard scoring scamper in the second quarter.

Lakeside, now 3-5 overall and 0-2 in district play, will close out the season next Friday on the road at Jonesboro-Hodge.



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GOVERNMENT *Profile* 2022



Minden mayor talks about what's in store for 2022

WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald

If there's one thing that Mayor Terry Gardner loves to do, it's brag about his favorite place on earth, the city of Minden. Over the past four years, Gardner has devoted his efforts to doing whatever possible to make the City of Minden as great as it can possibly be. Whether this is through bringing new businesses to town, infrastructure, securing funding, etc., Mayor Gardner has worked tirelessly to help Minden and its residents realize its full potential.

"This year we've seen so many new family-owned businesses locate here in Minden, and what excites me about that is that the strength of any small town economy relies on their small businesses," said Gardner.

"I'm very content with the steady growth the city has experienced over the past four years. We've had sixty new businesses open bringing with them over 300 jobs. While we would always love for another large company to come to town, it's the small businesses that create the unique local culture of the city for its residents and tourists to enjoy."

Speaking of tourists, Minden is expected to see an increase in out-of-towners coming through to check out the renovated properties that will be featured on HGTV's show "Hometown Kickstart" which is set to air later this spring.

"Minden is on the move and we're continuing that progress with HGTV airing at the end of April. This is projected to bring a mass influx of tourism. More tour-



GARDNER

ists means more money spent at our local businesses, and more money spent locally means more tax dollars we can use to improve the city," said Gardner.

Mayor Gardner has been leading talks with local organizations and businesses to discuss ways in which the city can position itself to cater to these tourists, ensuring that their time spent in the city is enjoyable and memorable.

That's not all Minden has in store for its future. While perhaps not as glamorous as being featured on television, the city has been preparing to make use of the funds granted by the federal government through the American Rescue Plan to rehabilitate Minden's infrastructure. Most notably, the city's iconic water tower in downtown Minden will be receiving a face-lift later this year.

"We're getting ready to do a complete, half a million dollar rehab on our water tower downtown. We will be completely draining it so our crew can go inside and get our water tower in tip-top shape. On the outside, the tower will be completely sand blasted, re-welded, and residents will see a new and exciting paint job when they see the tower while traveling along our brick streets," said Gardner.

Minden is also nearing the final stages of beginning development of their solar plant, which is being funded through the money gained from the Swepco settlement, lowering the costs of utilities for its residents.

"This year we started clearing the land for our solar plant. This will be a 1.2 million dollar investment with the city. This will help lower residents' utility bills by 18 dollars a month," said Gardner.

He also spoke of the 1.2 million dollar sewer grant that the city of Minden was able to apply for due to the active participation from citizens residing in District's A and B. The money will in turn be used to improve the

sewer infrastructure within these districts.

"We'll be signing the documents soon to submit our application for this grant. This was only made possible because the residents of Districts A and B were willing to give us their signature, and we appreciate those that did for helping us to acquire this funding," said Gardner.

The citizens' cooperation in helping Minden to get this grant showcased the reason Mayor Gardner believes Minden is the greatest place to call home.

"The thing that excites me the most about our city is that we all come together for the good and growth of our city. I'm only one person, and this city needs a lot of hands to keep things running," said Gardner.

"I consider myself very fortunate for the employees we have here at City Hall, their experience, and their willingness to do whatever they can to move Minden forward. Do we all get along all the time? No, of course not. We're people, and, like all people, at times we have our differences. But at the end of the day, we always come together to do what needs to be done for the good of the city."

This sentiment doesn't only extend to the employees that work in the City, but to all residents in Minden who do whatever they can to make the city feel like home.

"The love that the citizens have for this city can be seen on display every single day. From the creation of new and exciting community events to bring people together, to the creation of beautiful murals that brighten up our downtown, to the philanthropy showcased through events like the Minden St. Jude Auction or non-profit organizations like We're Here. We all have a part to play in making Minden as great as it can possibly be, and whenever the city requires help to make that happen, there are always people willing to rise to the occasion," said Gardner.

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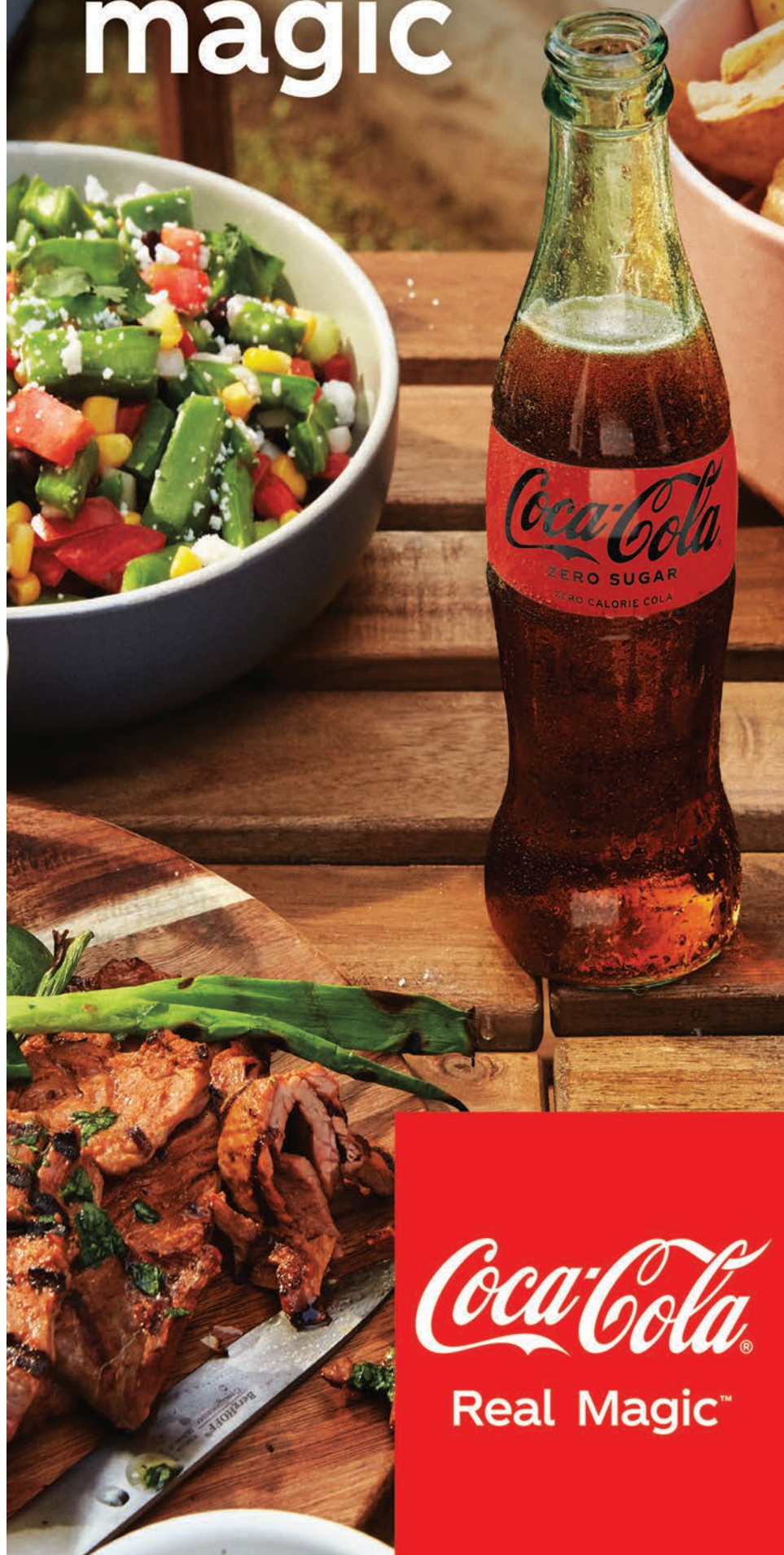


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SIBLEY IMPROVES INFRASTRUCTURE

AMBER McDOWD
Minden Press-Herald

The state of the infrastructure in the U.S. is a growing problem, but the Town of Sibley is working hard to make sure that it is not a problem for them. Mayor Jimmy Williams was happy to relate all the improvements Sibley has made and what they plan for the future.

“We just finished a one million dollar sewer-improvement grant,” Mayor Williams said, “and we have two more in the works. We’re using our money wisely. It’s all about getting grants.”

Just last year, Sibley had a LemTec biological treatment system installed. According to Climate-Policy-Watcher.org, a LemTec system is “a lagoon-based treatment process composed of a series of aerobic cells followed by an anaerobic settling pond.” This system uses a modular cover to completely cover the system rather than a mat to retain duckweed. According to Lemna Environmental Technologies, “Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) removal is critical to wastewater treatment. Excess BOD causes algae, cyanobacteria and tetrad growth.” Excess BOD also leads to an increase in “offensive odors and extended treatment time.”

“There’s some things we need to improve on,” said Mayor Williams, “Our contact chamber needs to be big-



ger, and there’s several things we need to do, but putting the LemTec System in was a big deal.”

“We also have a two million dollar water grant that, hopefully, we’ll get funded this year. We plan to go in and completely redo our water system,” said Williams. “Our wells are shallow. We’re in the Wilcox aquifer, and it’s got a lot of iron ore in it. We’re planning on putting sand boosters on all of our wells to take the iron out. We’re trying to improve all our water.”

The Town of Sibley actively works to get grants. They can frequently find someone else to match funds from those grants, which means “the citizens don’t have to pay, and we don’t have to go out and borrow money to pay for it,” Williams said.

“If we didn’t get these grants, water would cost a whole lot of money,” Williams continued. “Everybody thinks water and sewage is free. You turn it on, you flush it—it costs. Our chemical costs have gone up probably six to seven times since I’ve come into office, and our rates have gone up very little.”

Grants from the state come with some strings attached. Accepting the grants means that the town must get a price, or rate, survey. “They kind of dictate what the rates are,” said Williams, “but we try to hold it back. We’re trying to raise them slowly, but when they come in with those grants, they’re going to make you put them up there. Our rates are really low for a town our size. Down the road, water is going to be a luxury, like it is in California. Our aquifers are getting lower. People are going to have to start using groundwater, and it’s so much more expensive to treat that.”

The mayor and his team have been working hard to improve the water and sewage systems for the Town of Sibley. “I’ve got a good bunch of engineers that help me out a lot,” said the mayor, “and having good working relations with the council makes everything easier.”



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Webster Police Jury recaps a busy but successful 2021

WILL PHILLIPS

Minden Press-Herald

The President of the Webster Parish Police Jury, Jim Bonsall, sat down with the Minden Press-Herald to look back over the Jury's past year and discuss the major developments that are taking place within the parish. This discussion covered a wide variety of topics including their decision to sell the landfill, their new responsibilities granting tax exemptions for expanding business, and Camp Minden being selected to host a big annual archery tournament.

One of the biggest wins for the Police Jury this year was getting Camp Minden selected as the location to hold the Annual Archery Association Pro/Am competition for the next decade. This accomplishment was the result of a collaborative effort between the Police Jury and the Shreveport/Bossier Sports Commission.

"I think Bossier and us work together really well. When this deal about the archery tournament came up, they wanted to do a lot out there. They wanted 15 acres of milled asphalt. We haven't laid that much milled asphalt down in 10 years," said Bonsall.

"Bossier and us were going to do it. They wanted to do it on the weekend, but we would have had to pay our guys overtime to do it then, so we said we're going to do what we're going to do during the week, and if y'all want to work on the weekends you can."

Here Bonsall was also sure to credit Teddy Holloway, who got to work laying out the asphalt. Knowing that Webster was getting to work, Bossier decided to send their people to Camp Minden during the week as well, with Holloway being in charge and getting the job wrapped up in three days.

Bonsall stated, "Our guys were over there working, and Bossier decided to come along and they kind of just got with our crew, and Teddy did a great job organizing them. It wasn't all our equipment or all of our men that did it, but he ran the show. It got done in a hurry, and they moved a lot of dirt."

Bonsall described the past year of the Police Jury as quiet, which he thinks is a good thing. However, that isn't to say that other notable events haven't taken place. With the Jury's contract with Republic Services (the manager of the landfill) being up for renewal soon, they engaged in negotiations with Republic to try to find a more amenable agreement.

"We had a contract with Republic. They would operate it and pay us so much a ton for the garbage that goes into the landfill. Our part of the deal was that we have to keep the permits current," said Bonsall.

The original contract was negotiated some time ago, but things have changed and the royalties the Jury made from the

landfill didn't even cover the costs of what they had to put into it annually. It instead cost them thousands of dollars to upkeep their end of the contract. As of this year, Bonsall estimated that the landfill cost them \$50,000 a year.

"When I first got on the jury, they did a lot more oil waste out there, but that's gone away. We were making maybe \$100,000 a year off of it back then. But as I said, our royalties have decreased, and we also had to keep up the permits. By the time we bought the permits, the last 5-6 years it was costing us money to operate," said Bonsall.

This is what led to the Jury attempting to negotiate a contract with Republic that would allow them to continue operating the landfill as they had been, but without it being as costly for the Police Jury.

"There was a 25 year contract with Republic to operate the landfill. That contract is coming to an end next year. We

take that cost off of the Jury's shoulders and, instead, they would be earning up to five times that amount annually.

He made sure to note that he understands that not all parish citizens are happy with their decision but, given the costs it took to upkeep vs. the revenue they can now generate instead, the question came down to how many and how much parish residents are benefitting from their ownership of the landfill and whether that was worth turning down an opportunity that not only reduces costs but also brings in a significant amount of revenue.

"Now I'm sure, not all parish residents are on the same page as us. But we're getting 20 million dollars in the bank, and we're going to have a landfill that'll operate the same way it's been operating pretty much," said Bonsall.

He didn't shy away from the fact that yes, some residents would now have to pay to use the landfill when initially they



started out trying to negotiate a new contract, but we could never come together on the figures. Mostly this was me, but I thought it was worth more than they were offering to pay us, and we got to a point where we were aiming high and they were aiming low, and we just couldn't meet in the middle," said Bonsall.

This is what led the Jury to the decision to put the landfill up for bid. Two businesses placed bids, one of them not meeting the minimum bid requirement, so the only deal left on the table was \$20 million from Republic Services, an offer that they ultimately decided to take up.

Bonsall plans to invest the \$20 million so that they can earn a steady annual revenue of \$350,000 to \$500,000, which would last for years to come and give the Jury a significant sum of annual revenue that they can put toward the needs of the parish.

"In the beginning, we're going to invest that twenty million. It's pretty restricted what you can do with government money as far as investment. There's not much risk in the options available, so there's not as much return. Mostly bonds, but with that I'm sure we're going to have a return of \$350,000 a year. I hope we have a return of \$500,000 a year," said Bonsall.

Since the landfill was initially costing the jury \$50,000 a year, this would instead

were able to use it for free. "The thing that I have heard the most about is, if you live in Webster Parish and you haul your household garbage, you do not have to pay for anything. Now, you will pay something. Now, there will be roughly a five dollar charge where you used to be able to go out there for nothing. That is what I've heard the most about. The people who haul their own garbage out there, they are going to have to pay something now when you used to have to pay nothing," said Bonsall.

However, Bonsall and other Jurors saw more to be gained from the sale of the landfill. It grants them more money to take care of the needs of the parish compared to continuing to operate it at a loss so that those residents who regularly use the landfill could continue doing so for free.

"The deal is not done but will be soon, and I think it's going to be a win-win deal for the parish," said Bonsall.

Bonsall also addressed some controversy the Police Jury got into earlier last year regarding a tax exemption they initially denied to E.I. Williams that is available to businesses that are expanding.

"Recently, the Louisiana State Government changed the way they handle tax exemptions for industry. Up until last year, if a business was going to undertake an expansion that created jobs, then the

state would grant them a tax exemption for around 10 years," said Bonsall.

"Last year, the state chose to put that in the local government's lap. Whether we want to grant them an exemption or not, it is up to us. Last year we had our first one. It was E.I. Williams in the North Webster Parish Industrial District."

Bonsall was quite frank in admitting that they were not made fully aware of this change in how tax exemptions would be handled and, as a result, were unfamiliar with the first of these exemptions that came before the Jury.

"There was a good bit of controversy surrounding that. We did not know enough about what we were doing and, when it first came to us, we denied that exemption. But then, I'm going to tell you, we got an education," said Bonsall.

Following the denial of this exemption, community leaders and members of the business community contacted their jurors and made their feelings about the decision known. After listening to their constituents and developing more of an understanding of this tax exemption and the benefits it could bring to the parish, the Police Jury voted to overturn their initial decision, granting E.I. Williams the exemption.

"Now we do this, not every month, but we have some more of these cases that have come in front of us, and every one we've gotten since, we've granted the exemption," said Bonsall.

The benefit of granting exemptions such as these is that they can provide an incentive for businesses to expand to a capacity where they can take on more employees. This means that not only is there a capital investment being spent within the parish there also are more jobs for the citizens of the parish.

"We've got another big one coming up for Teijin Automotive Group. They are doing a ten million dollar expansion that's coming to us here in the next couple of months," said Bonsall. "It looks like for Webster Parish we will be getting a lot of that. They are not completely tax exempt, they still pay some local tax and state tax, but the majority of their ad valorem taxes are exempted for ten years."

Even during a year initially described by Bonsall as "quiet," the Police Jury still had some important decisions to make that enact meaningful change in Webster Parish. In regards to the landfill, they showed an ability to make difficult decisions—having to weigh the benefits of selling the landfill against the utility it currently provides parish residents—which would lead to a better future for the parish. That decision will allow them to turn an annual cost of \$50,000 to hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue that can be used to further tend to the needs of the parish. Given the E.I. Williams controversy, the jurors showcased an ability to listen to the voices of their constituents, admit they initially may not have made the best decision, and to take the necessary actions to correct that in a timely manner. There is a lot that the Webster Parish Police Jury is responsible for, far more than covered in this feature. This being the case, citizens should rest easy knowing that this responsibility lies in the hands of people who can make the tough decisions when it comes to doing what's best for the parish.

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From Webster Parish Sheriff Jason Parker

WILL PHILLIPS

Minden Press-Herald

As the duly elected Sheriff by the people of Webster Parish, Jason Parker is tasked with overseeing the operations of the Sheriff's Office and ensuring that the manpower and resources they have available are used effectively to best serve and protect its citizens. This hefty responsibility is one that Parker takes in stride, constantly finding new ways to innovate the office so they are well equipped to handle the law enforcement needs of the parish and its res-

idents.

After taking office, Parker made it a priority to make sure his deputies get as much training as possible so they are prepared for anything this line of work can throw at them. Over the past year, not only are the deputies receiving this training, but Parker has acquired deputies with a variety of POST certified credentials so that they can conduct this training in-house.

"We've strengthened our training programs here at the office, which I am particularly proud of. We now have two full time POST certified training officers, so we can conduct this training in-house. This makes it so we don't have to send

our deputies all over the state or country to obtain basic training. We can do it right here. We even have a POST certified firearms instructor, so we have somebody that can certify new hires for their use of firearms which is important for the safety of our deputies."

As a result, new hires can be trained and ready for duty as fast as possible. Not only that, but this helps to cut the costs of travel expenses associated with sending deputies to other locations to receive their training.

Training is one thing, but another item of importance for Parker was that of making sure his office is as transparent as possible. Over the past year the office has upgraded the body cameras each deputy is equipped with whenever they are on the job.

"I think transparency is extremely important. We've upgraded and enhanced the body cameras that our deputies wear while they are on duty. This helps us to keep our deputies more accountable and makes our office more transparent as a whole. Videos don't lie," said Parker.

"When I first started as a law enforcement officer 29 years ago, we didn't have body cams. It was our word against somebody else's if something were to happen, where as of now, these body cameras tell the whole story. For this reason, I think it's very important for law enforcement today to have those body cameras on as they're going about their duties in the parish."

While the Sheriff's Office is tasked with the responsibility of making sure that the

citizens abide by the law, Parker is charitable in his understanding that people make mistakes, and that there are ways to prevent people from engaging in dangerous activities without immediately jumping to issuing citations or fines. One way the office has implemented this philosophy is through their acquisition of mobile speed trailers, which alert drivers passing by to their current speed, flashing bright lights if the drivers are going too far above the speed limit.

"Over the last year we've obtained a couple of mobile speed trailers that we're funded through a grant for public safety and awareness. They do not issue tickets, but we're able to locate them in certain locations where we receive a lot of speeding complaints, such as school zones," said Parker.

"We understand that, when people are driving, sometimes they're not paying attention to their speed or aren't aware of how much over the speed limit they're driving. These mobile speed trailers allow us to make citizens aware of how fast they're going by displaying their speed as opposed to stationing deputies along the roadways and issuing citations."

It's been a little over a year since Sheriff Parker decided to create an animal control program within his office to give citizens someone to call whenever animal-related issues arise within the parish. Parker credits the success of the program to Deputy David Robinson who he chose to be in charge of the department.

"David has been doing an outstanding job and not only by my account. The members of the Police Jury are always sure to relay during their monthly meetings that the people they represent are happy with the program," said Parker.

"Due to us only having one deputy in that department, David stays busy. At some points he's overloaded. He gets calls to go out and respond to situations on weekdays and weekends. Seeing how often we get calls to go out and handle animal-related issues is why, at some point in the future, we are considering adding another animal control officer," said Parker.

Having a body that actively enforces the laws of the parish not only gives people someone to call to get these problems resolved but it has also helped to prevent problems from arising in the first place as citizens become more aware of their legal obligations when owning a pet.

"I believe since the creation of the department we are making progress with awareness of the parish-wide ordinance pertaining to dogs. I'm a dog lover. I've got two myself but, if you're going to own a dog, you need to make sure you either have them inside a fence or at least where they can't get into your neighbor's property," said Parker.

Providing an example of what happens when the ordinance is not adhered to, Parker recalled, "Up on the north end of the parish we had some dogs that got into somebody's fence who were raising deer, and they ended up killing four to five baby deer."

When enforcing this ordinance, the Animal Control Department makes sure to differentiate between good faith dog owners whose pups get out once or twice



and negligent pet owners who aren't taking proper responsibility of controlling their dogs.

"When we go out on complaints for loose dogs, we try to educate the owner first. If it's the first time we've gone to that address we document it. If we have to go out there again we give them a warning, and if we have to go back out there a third time we have to issue them a citation for violation of the parish ordinance, which comes with a fine," said Parker.

The Animal Control department was created with the idea that they would mostly be dealing with stray dogs and cats around the parish. However, after its creation they soon found out that, given the substantial presence of agriculture in the parish, the animals they would be dealing with encompassed more than just cats and dogs. "Early on we believed we would be dealing with stray cats and dogs primarily, but it has developed into taking on cattle calls too. Cattle often escape from their owner's land and can end up getting on the roadways or damage other people's property. We have had some collisions involving cows on the roadway," said Parker.

The department in some circumstances also had to deal with animal abuse. "There are also cases involving people not taking care of them. It's a shame, but we've even had some cases where the horse died as a result of not properly being taken care of," said Parker.

Another subset of deputies that Parker takes great pride in are the School Resource Officers (SRO) that he tasks with protecting the schools, their students, and teachers of the parish.

"We have a great working relationship with the school board, and we have a total of six School Resource Officers in the parish. When students go out of town or out of parish to attend, for example, a basketball game, we have a deputy that escorts the students there and back to make sure that the kids get there safely. So in situations like the team's bus breaks down or has a flat tire, we have a deputy there that's going to be able to reach out to another sheriff office or department to get whatever resources they need. They also provide additional safety at the games," said Parker.

On top of keeping students safe, Parker explains that another responsibility of his SROs is to develop positive relationships with the students, instilling in them a positive impression of law enforcement that extends beyond their years spent in the school system.

Our SROs wear our uniforms while at the schools. The kids need to see those SROs in a positive light," said Parker.

"There are times, for example, when I go into stores like Walmart and I've got my gun and badge on, where there's a kid with their parents. The mom and dad might joke saying something like, 'they're going to take you to jail if you're bad,' and whatnot. Obviously it's a joke, but something like that can leave an impression on a kid. We want them to understand that our deputies are here to protect them, and a key part of that is making sure our SROs develop positive relationships with the students of the schools they're stationed at."

"A lot of these kids, they need some kind of direction or positive role model in their life, and those SROs provide that on a daily basis. First and foremost, their job is to keep that school, the students, and the teachers safe. But on top of that, they're there to show kids that we're human too. That we put on our pants one leg

at a time like everyone else," said Parker.

"And if there is a problem at home or at school, I want those kids to feel comfortable enough to go to those SROs and say I've got a problem. If we can do that, we've achieved our goal."

It would be remiss in a publication detailing the past year's most notable events

to write a story about the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office without honoring the memory and sacrifice of the deputy who lost his life in the line of duty, the late William "Billy" Collins Jr.

On July 9th of this past year, a quiet afternoon in Doyline was pierced by the sound of a gunshot that would ultimately leave Collins with an injury that would later be the cause of his death. At the time, Collins was first on the scene responding to a disturbance call taking place within the 400 block of Green Tree Road. Shortly after his arrival, the individual causing the disturbance opened fire on Collins, leaving him critically injured.

Law enforcement agencies from all over the surrounding area were quick to make their way to Green Tree Road after hearing that a fellow law enforcement officer was injured. While Collins was transported to the hospital, a standoff ensued between the shooter and law enforcement that would last until late into the night. Unfortunately, at 7:43 P.M. that same day, Deputy Collins was pronounced dead.

In a late night news conference, Sheriff Parker maintained his composure while no doubt experiencing the grief of losing one of his Deputies and let the public know of Collins' passing, stating, "It's a very sad event for me to be able to come up here and speak to y'all, but I've got to give somebody justice. I'm very sad to say tonight, around 7:43 p.m., we lost a good man. The family lost a good husband, a good father, a good Webster Parish deputy, and a good patrol officer for the City of Doyline that loved and served his citizens well. It just breaks my heart because, every time we put on this uniform and we go out and try to serve the public, this could happen to any one of us."

Parker intentionally did not release the name of the suspect responsible for this tragedy so that the focus of everyone following the course of events would be thinking of one name and one name only, that of the Webster Parish Sheriff's Deputy and Doyline Police Officer, William Earl Collins Jr., also known as Billy.

It's been a little over eight months since that tragic event, however, no amount of time will dull the memory of Deputy Collins and the ultimate sacrifice he paid while honorably serving in his capacity as a law enforcement officer, especially not in the mind of Sheriff Parker.

Being on the Board of the Louisiana Sheriff's Association, Parker is continuing to honor Collins by putting his name forth for the Bob Buckley Ribbon Award, an award given to those injured in the line of duty. "This will be the first time that the Louisiana Sheriff's Association has ever recognized somebody that lost their life in the line of duty. It's an honor, not only to serve on this board, but also to be able to represent Billy at this particular time," said Parker.

It's a cruel fact of life that nothing can be done to bring back Deputy Collins or truly make up for the pain his sudden departure brought to those closest to him. However, as long as Collins continues to exist within the memories of his family, friends, fellow deputies and officers, as well as the citizens he vowed to serve and protect, the legacy of Collins and the sacrifice he made that day will continue to live on.



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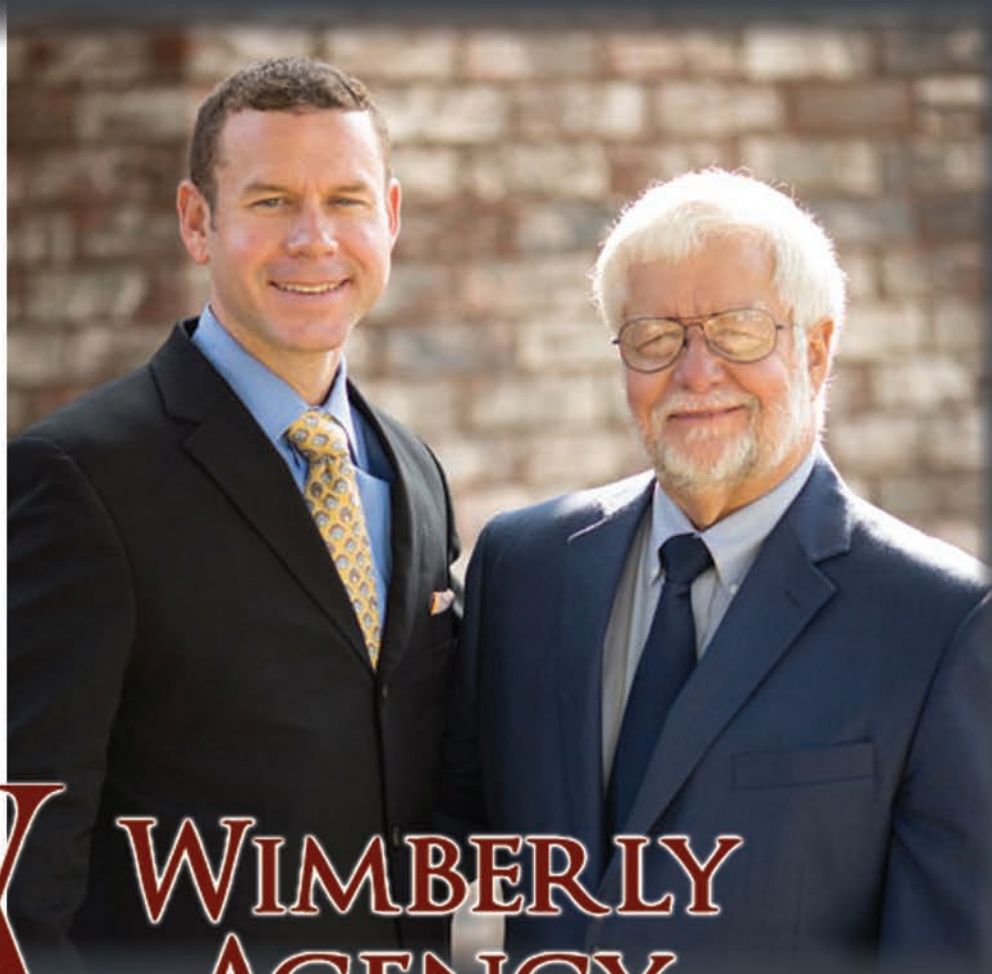
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MPD'S STEP PROGRAM

Created in an effort to slow down traffic on I-20 as it passes through Minden city limits

AMBER McDOWD

Minden Press-Herald

The Safety Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) was created in an effort to slow down traffic on I-20 as it passes through Minden city limits. "We have a stretch of interstate that we have a tremendous amount of accidents on," said Minden's Chief of Police, Steve Cropper. "People traveling I-20 tend to exceed the speed limit, so we were trying to set up a program to eliminate some of the accidents and to slow people down on I-20. We came up with the program called STEP."

In April of 2021, an agreement to support this program was signed by the City of Minden, the Minden Police Department, the Judge's Office, and the Ward Marshal. The program was operational right away.

"We get off-duty officers out on I-20. We don't write a ticket unless they're doing at least 12 mph over the speed limit. The speed limit is 70 mph. If they're doing 82 mph, they just keep going, but if they're doing 83, we stop them and write them a citation. It's kind of hard for people to argue about 13 mph over the limit," the Chief said.

Having officers parked on I-20 also

helps deter crime in town. "We get a lot of people coming from the Shreveport and Bossier areas to steal from Walmart. A lot of times, if they see a unit out on I-20, they may just keep on driving and go further down the road. It's a deterrent having an officer sitting out there on I-20."

The citations issued by the STEP program have a set cost. Any person who receives one has the option to pay it prior to going to court. If it is paid in advance, the incident will not go on their insurance. "It's an incentive to people that are breaking the law and driving 83 mph on our interstate to pay that citation prior to court," Cropper said. "It doesn't go on their driving records."

The funds received from the tickets are split between the Judge's Office, City of Minden, and the Police Department. The Ward Marshal's Office gets \$30 of each ticket that's paid because "if they don't pay it, it's his [the Marshal's] responsibility to go out there and try to collect," said Cropper.

"It took off really well. A lot of guys were out there working in their off-time. We wrote a lot of tickets. And then we had a couple quit, then COVID hit real bad, and then the Christmas season came, and there were a lot of other off-duty opportunities," stated Cropper.

Officers are in high demand during the Christmas season as banks, schools, and other businesses hire extra security. "It's kind of stretched everybody really thin, but it's picked back up this month," Cropper said in January.

Officers were originally being paid time and a half for this off-duty service. More experienced officers were more likely to sign up, since they could make a significant amount per hour. Less experienced, and lower paid, officers often found other off-duty work that paid more than one and a half times their hourly wages. This changed as of February 10th, 2022. Officers will now be paid \$45 per hour, regardless of their base pay, for this off-duty service. The police department and city officials hope this will encourage more officers to participate, aid in retaining officers that might otherwise leave to find higher wages, and increase the recruitment of officers from the surrounding area.

Besides the pay increase, another change made to the program during its semi-annual review was the lifting of restrictions. The original program restricted the area to I-20 and the hours of operation from 8 am to 5 pm. The program can now operate at any time of the day or night. Officers will also be able to write

tickets on any highway within the city limits, not just the interstate. The "more than 12 mph" standard still applies to the highways.

Between June and December of 2021, the STEP Program issued 698 citations and collected \$140,400 in fines. The money first pays for expenses before being disbursed to the different departments. For example, the Minden Police Department has used money from the STEP Program to order four ID readers. This will limit the amount of time each stop takes and will, as a result, make the process safer for the officers since they spend much less time standing beside a car on the roadside. These readers should be available in April, 2022.

The STEP Program is already having an effect on the number of fatalities along that stretch of I-20. The year before the program began, there were about seven fatal accidents on that piece of interstate. In the year since the program started, there have only been two reported.

"Those guys can go out there and write several tickets really easily and not have to really look for someone who's speeding. We've had officers clock them at 100 mph." Chief Cropper concluded, "It's a really good program. It's slowing people down a little bit."



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