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Remembering Terry Gardner

Will Phillips

Amber McDown

Minden Press-Herald

Terry Gardner wore a lot of different hats. He was, of course, Mayor for the City of Minden, but also a savvy businessman, a husband, a man of God, and a dear friend to many. Even before his time as Mayor, he was a notable community figure, contributing his time and efforts on countless boards and in multiple organizations all with the intent of bettering his home and the lives of those who live here.

With someone who was so active throughout the community, it's hard to quantify how big of a hole his passing has left in the hearts of many who live here, and even beyond the city limits.

A sentiment he could often be heard expressing was that, as Mayor, he wanted to leave Minden better off than how it was when he first took office. This was a philosophy he applied not only in his capacity as mayor, but also in the lives of those who were lucky enough to know him.

Suffice it to say, he definitely was able to follow through with that goal. You can't pass through Minden without seeing the influence that he's left here. From the new businesses that have opened up throughout the city to the rehabilitation projects he helped facilitate, his efforts have definitely aided in breathing new life into what he would call his favorite place on earth.

The Mayor's passing also serves as a crucial reminder to the wider community of how limited our time here on earth is, and that a tomorrow is never guaranteed. Instead of letting this fact act as a deterrent, it should instead inspire us to make the best use of time possible, and to strive to mold the world into the one that we would want to live in.

Gardner was truly an embodiment of this mindset. His legacy will live on long past him, both in the visible changes he had on the city, as well as in the memories of those close to him.

Regardless of how people came to know him, whether that be through his capacity as Mayor, as CEO of TG Companies, or as family or friend, it was clear to all, through his words and his actions, how much he loved his home of Minden, Louisiana. He will truly be missed.

And for all the credit that can be given to Mayor Gardner, he was always one to say that he couldn't do it alone. He was always quick to express appreciation and kind words to those that helped him to bring his vision for a better Minden to life. Many of those same individuals saw fit to share their thoughts and memories of the time they spent getting to know Terry Gardner, which can be read below.



(DAVID SPECHT, PRESIDENT OF SPECHT NEWS-PAPERS) Over the years, I've had the privilege of watching Terry continue to invest his time, money, and heart into our community and its people. While he may have been mayor for the past 3 1/2 years, he's been "Mr. Minden." for much longer than that.

From his volunteerism, to his efforts to revitalize and grow the business community, Terry's fingerprints are all over Minden. His passing has left a hole that won't be easily filled.

(WAYNE EDWARDS, MINDEN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOR DISTRICT A) Deep down inside, Terry had a sincere love for the City of Minden. He had his special way of doing things. He's done a lot for Minden. A lot of real estate, growing business, and he was truly an entrepreneur and a risk taker. Deep down inside I truly believe he wanted to do the right thing for the city.

(TERIKA WILLIAMS-WALKER, MINDEN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOR DISTRICT B) Mayor Gardner poured his heart and soul into Minden, especially the beauty of Minden. He will be missed by all of his family and friends. I send my condolences and prayers to his wife and family.

(VINCEN BRADFORD, MINDEN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOR DISTRICT C) May he rest in peace.

(MICHAEL ROY, MINDEN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOR DISTRICT D) Terry was a dear friend of mine for a long time. I think he was one of the greatest mayors that we've had. I know we'll all miss him dearly.

Recently I bought some roses from Terry. A couple of Mister Lincolns, really red roses, very fragrant. After we bought them we planted them. They were blooming and really pretty, but over time they wilted and started dying off. Terry would often come by the house to visit. The morning that he and Mahalla went to Virginia, he stopped by and I could tell he wasn't feeling good. I asked if he was alright and he said that he was just feeling a little tired. He pointed at the roses and told me, "You need to pinch off the dead flowers and they'll bloom again." So I did, and in the following days I had seen some growth but no buds and no flowers.

The morning after he passed, I was walking around and I noticed something that caught my eye. It was red. I walked out to the planter and there were three roses, one had bloomed and two were buds opening up. This morning I went out, and they all had bloomed. I know in my heart that that is his way of telling me that everything will be alright.

(PAM BLOXOM, MINDEN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER FOR DISTRICT E) My friendship with Terry began some 25 years ago. He has always worked hard striving for the best possible results, whether it be a landscaping project, a Chamber function, or a charity event.

• See GARDNER, page 12



Project Reclaim helping Minden youth

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 Shemarera 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.

Meet Jason Parker - Webster Parish Sheriff

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 residents.

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

• See SHERIFF, page 6

Anne Claire Lemoine crowned Miss Minden

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."

Miss Lemoine went on to compete in the Miss Louisiana 2022 pageant and was named third runner-up out of 29 contestants.



SHERIFF

Continued from page 5

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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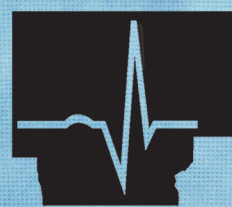
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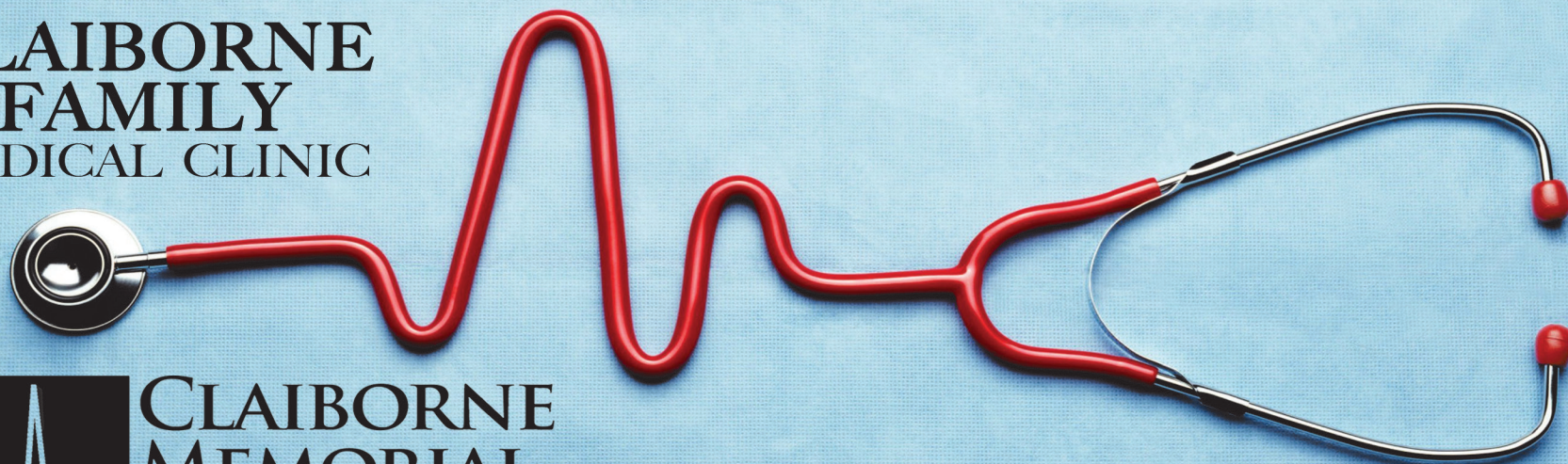
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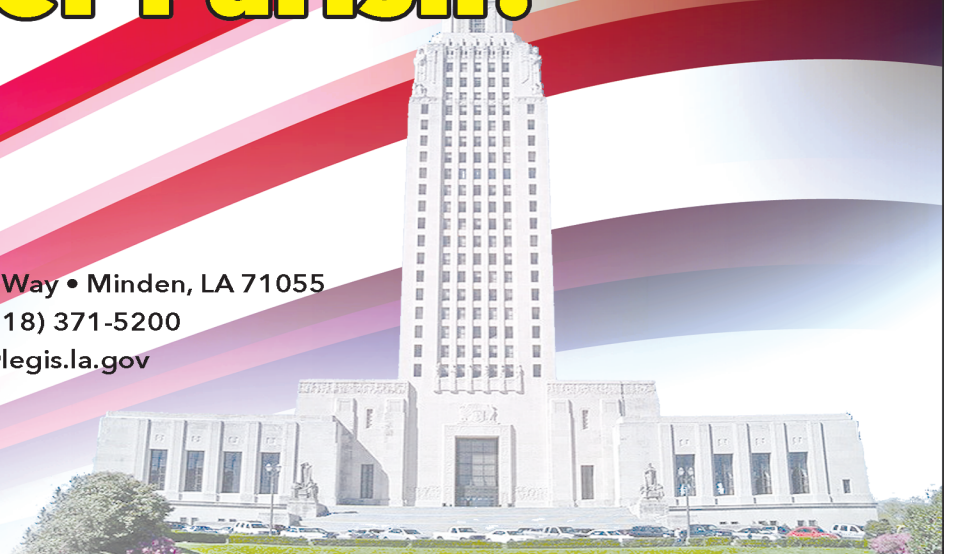


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Minden St. Jude Auction bigger & better

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.

GARDNER

Continued from page 3

Terry's election as Mayor was his dream come true. He loved serving Minden and its people. Our city has never looked as pretty as it has in the past three years.

Terry was a visionary. His goals would have taken Minden to a new level. Unfortunately, he lacked the team to accomplish what could have been.

It was an honor to serve with Terry. I believe our community will remember him always for his generosity and kindness. What a blessing he has been to us all.

(STEVE CROPPER, MINDEN POLICE CHIEF) Mayor Gardner absolutely loved our City. I know no one that put more time, money, and energy into the City of Minden. Mayor Gardner loved the people of Minden, especially the youth of our community. He dedicated so much time in teaching our youth about our city, and wanted everyone to love Minden as much as he did. Mayor Gardner was proud to represent the City of Minden, and continually wanted the very best for our City. Over the past 4 years, Mayor Gardner made many trips downstairs at City Hall, to touch base and check on all our officers. Many trips resulted in him getting bombarded with questions and requests from the officers, but Mayor Gardner did his very best in answering all their questions the best he could, and he never stopped coming down to check on us. Trust me, when I say, some of my officers did not cut Mayor Gardner any slack, but he never stopped caring about us. The loss of Mayor Gardner has created a large void in our hearts and will be missed by all of us. The City of Minden has lost its most dedicated fan and I pray people will remember their experiences with Mayor Gardner, and never forget what this one man has done for our City. I know the Minden Police Department will miss him greatly. God Bless his family and May he Rest in Peace.

(WILL GERDING, SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR FOR THE CITY OF MINDEN) For the last four years Terry Gardner was a big part of my life. He and I were very close. Terry was like a second father to me. He mentored me and showed me how to be an amazing leader and taught me how important relationships are in this life. My heart aches so much at the loss of my dear friend, but I know he is rejoicing with the

Lord right now. Terry is no longer in pain or suffering. I thank the Lord for the opportunity to have met this great man. He will be dearly missed. Thank you for everything you have done for the City of Minden and for me personally, Terry. Your legacy will live on for generations through the lives you've touched. We love you. My prayers go out to Debbie Gardner and all of Terry's loved ones during this difficult time.

(JASON PARKER, WEBSTER PARISH SHERIFF) Terry was a good friend that will truly be missed. He was a very kindhearted fella that would help anyone in need. He poured his heart and soul into making Minden a special place to live and visit. He was dedicated to making sure Minden was clean and presentable. As Mayor he initiated a WPSO work crew that picks up trash in the city weekly. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family and the Minden community.

(ROBERT MILLS, LOUISIANA STATE SENATOR FOR DISTRICT 36) The late Mayor Terry L. Gardner was a longtime resident of Minden, a trusted leader of the business community and as the highlight of his last years served as Minden's Mayor from 2019 until his untimely death on June 28th. He was an energetic and successful leader in both his commercial and municipal careers, and Mayor Gardner's achievements will certainly be with us for generations to come. Upon my election in 2020, I located the district office for Senate District 36 in Minden because it was the geographic center of the district, the largest town in the district, and of course, it's robust historical significance. Terry, himself, knew and loved Minden for many reasons, but it was the

wonderful community which motivated him to serve. Mayor Gardner was a constant gentleman, a gracious host and a close friend to myself and my Legislative Assistant, Brenda Autry. We will surely miss Mayor Gardner's smile and committed leadership. Our continued prayers go out to his widow, Debbie Gardner in her time of such great loss.

(WAYNE MCMAHEN, LOUISIANA STATE REPRESENTATIVE FOR DISTRICT 10) Minden has lost a great advocate in Mayor Gardner. He tirelessly worked to promote our community and make it a better place for everyone, to work, to live and to enjoy. We are a better community today because of Terry's years of steadfast dedication and service.

(Johnny Rowland, Superintendent of the Webster Parish School District) On behalf of the Webster Parish School Board, I would like to express that we were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Mayor Terry Gardner. I knew Terry personally as we worked together on several projects concerning Minden schools and the City of Minden. Terry loved serving as Mayor of Minden and his passion and dedication will be missed. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Debbie and their family. They will continue to be in our thoughts and prayers.

(Jim Bonsall, President of the Webster Parish Police Jury) As Police Jury President while Terry was mayor, Terry was all business. He always had what he considered the city's best interest on his mind. Any meeting I went to concerning the city, Terry was always there. He was always trying to help the people he represented. The city, Community College, Chamber, and many other organi-

zations are going to miss his input.

Terry lived in my Police Jury district. He was always supportive.

On a personal note, Terry had a lot of vision as far as real estate and landscaping goes. He refurbished several old buildings downtown and started some new businesses that helped lead a movement downtown that has revitalized from a period where it looked like it was dying. Whether Terry was re-elected or not he would have been an influence to the city. We will miss him.

(Denise Edwards, Webster Parish Tax Assessor) This year Mayor Terry Gardner's selection in the annual "Minden Press-Herald Favorites" for the Minden Press-Herald "Favorite Public Official Award" is indicative of the high regard Minden citizens held for him and for his long and faithful service and dedication to the City of Minden citizens, his service to God in the Minden First Baptist Church and as a member of many City of Minden civic and community organizations.

Mayor Gardner was an exceedingly very special gentleman. He was a cornerstone of the Minden community where he enriched many lives through his service as Minden City Mayor and in his civic and community service; through his Christian witness and ministry; and through his countless community service activities. Mayor Gardner was a blessing to those whom he served, witnessed to and ministered to throughout his life and in the First Baptist Church of Minden where he served God long and faithfully in numerous church activities and to the many Webster Parish Work Release inmates who he employed in his landscape business and to whom he mentored, witnessed and provided with employment. He enriched the lives of many through employment in his many businesses.

Mayor Gardner's long, faithful, exceptional and dedicated service to the citizens of Minden is beyond measure. His service to Minden citizens will be forever and always remembered and revered. He was a blessing to Minden; to his wife Debbie, who he obviously loved dearly; to his many friends; to his Gardner Group employees; and to the many who he loved and who loved him. Mayor Gardner was truly a City of Minden, a Webster Parish, and a family treasure and will be profoundly missed by all.

(CARL THOMPSON, WEBSTER

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GARDNER

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PARISH DEPUTY TAX ASSESSOR)

Mayor Terry Gardner was a blessing to the citizens of our Great City of Minden. His vision of a Minden that provides all citizens with a safe, healthy, enjoyable, clean, convenient and peaceful city in which to live was a torch that he proudly carried high. He was a visionary and trailblazer and, equally importantly, totally and completely committed to the growth and viability of his beloved City of Minden. He and his faithful wife Debbie moved to Minden decades ago and planted their roots in Minden deep and firm. He often stated "I loved Minden and decided to invest my life here. I started my landscape business with a push lawnmower." Mayor Gardner was compassionate in his love for Minden and tirelessly invested his time and energy in Minden by serving on many boards and organizations including the Greater Minden Chamber, First Baptist Church, St. Jude, Lion's Club, Director of the Leadership Webster and Youth Leadership Programs and many parades and events. He regularly dedicated his own landscaping resources to beautifying Minden boulevards, streets and parks.

I first met Mayor Gardner when I was transferred from Camp Beauregard to Camp Minden in 2001. At the time Mayor Gardner was focused on growing his landscape business in which he hired Webster Parish Sheriff's Office Work Release inmates and gave them the training and encouragement to change their lives and become productive citizens by utilizing the skills and work ethics that he personally taught them with compassion and patience. He alone was instrumental in changing the lives of many of the Work Release inmates who worked for him by mentoring them, witnessing to them in God's Name and, after they were released from incarceration, hiring them as full-time employees.

Mayor Gardner was a special Servant of God who tirelessly served the Minden First Baptist Church including Director of the 6th Grade Sunday School for many years.

Mayor Gardner selflessly invested his time, energy, resources and money in improving Minden, making Minden a wholesome, healthy, safe and wonderful place to live, raise families and retire. With God's

blessings, Mayor Gardner's vision of a City of Minden as a growing, productive, safe, healthy, desirable and attractive city will be continued and carried forward by the Minden citizens to whom he loved and cherished. He will be revered and held in the highest esteem AND ALWAYS REMEMBERED!!

(TRACY CAMPBELL, PRESIDENT OF THE MINDEN LIONS CLUB) We grieve over the passing of our friend, mayor,

this faithful servant. Although we grieve, we are comforted to know that he is healed and whole again.

(SERENA GRAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WEBSTER PARISH CONVENTION & VISITORS COMMISSION) Mayor Gardner, or Terry as many of us knew him, had an amazing ability to take a piece of our history and bring it back to life. His creativity and vision for

legacy of his love for Minden lives on.

(STEPHANIE BARNETTE, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE GREATER MINDEN CHAMBER) Our relationship started on a professional level, but I feel lucky that I could call Terry Gardner my friend. The love and true desire he had to see Minden succeed cannot be matched. He gave so much of himself in so many ways to this community, even more than many of us even realize. It's hard to imagine Minden without TG. While I'm glad he's pain free now, we're really going to miss him. We've got a little girl, who along with her friends, are really going to miss their best buddy.

(Jessica Lewis, Director of the Joe LeBlanc Food Pantry) Our community has experienced what someone else described as a "gut punch" and that seemed very appropriate. Many of us have stood in prayer for Mayor Gardner since his announcement that he was ill. We expected him to beat the awful disease that was cancer. There is no doubt that Terry loved this community and he supported positive efforts to lift people up in Minden. Throughout my time here at the pantry whether it was our big move to the new building, our grand opening, or any of our many many fundraisers over the years, Mayor Gardner has supported every single one. He has helped us spread our mission with city leaders and both adults and kids going through the Leadership Webster programs. He has sponsored countless families during "Feed a Family" season. We even talked him into jumping into a dunking booth once. He did it willingly. He is leaving big shoes to be filled.

We will be praying over his family, Mrs. Debbie and the position of Mayor and whomever steps into that role next.

(GEORGE FRENCH, CLOSE FRIEND AND CAMPAIGN MANAGER) Let me begin by saying that Terry Gardner was a great friend of mine. He was that to many, many other individuals as well. However, I treasured that relationship because no matter how busy and involved he was (and he WAS busy and involved) he would always take the time to return a call or respond to a friend in need.

Almost 40 years ago we met...I am not sure what characterized that initial contact but it was my deep blessing and pleasure to work alongside his wife and our Executive



and fellow Lion, Terry Gardner. Terry was a dedicated Lion for more than 20 years. When we think of the Lions Club motto "We Serve," Terry quickly comes to mind. He was always willing to step up no matter if it was for the club, the city or the parish. Honestly, it's hard to imagine a Minden without TG. Please join us in praying for Debbie, the family and our city as we cope with the loss of

Minden helped rebuild our Main Street community, enhanced our fairs and festivals and energized a sense of community pride that was contagious. Terry didn't just support the idea of tourism. He took action and used his influence and leadership to spearhead renovations and economic development for our community. His presence will surely be missed and it's up to all of us to make sure his

• See GARDNER, page 14

How we got chosen for HGTV

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 Min-

den? 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 revitalization 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.

GARDNER

Continued from page 13

Assistant at Minden Medical Center, Debbie Gardner, during the time I knew Terry. Perhaps we met through her. Terry was the strong, caring, loving and supportive husband to Debbie. And the reverse attributes from Debbie were also true. They were quite a team.

From the little lawn-mowing service he first started almost 40 years ago to the large and diversified group of companies they built to this present day they were inseparable partners.

Terry loved Minden. He did not just love it...he L-O-V-E-D it, breathed it, thought about how he could improve it for the citizens DAILY! That consumed him. The business expertise, vision, creativity, dogged pursuit of a goal that characterized his success in the business world provided the foundation that drove him to further involve himself in Minden. Whether in civic or service organizations, community initiatives, national causes, our top-ranked new airport and finally city government he was Minden's Head Cheerleader!

Terry was a creative and thoughtful Business and Growth leader! He was a successful and loved man because he coupled his love

and generosity for his coworkers, friends and even those folks he did not know by identifying a "need" and "filling" it. Whether it was the landscaping and yard services profession for his coworkers, a restaurant for Minden, storage sites for the community, a hotel, and events center, cutting-edge community events like "Grillin' On Main"...all his initiatives provided jobs and growth and exposure for Minden.

Terry was a consummate Civic Partner! He began the Red Coat Ambassadors while at the Greater Minden Chamber of Commerce to greet new businesses. That was the springboard for the development of the Mardi Gras Krewe des Ambassadeurs which was focused on civic and community care initiatives as well as providing a social venue that was competitive with the other NW LA Krewes and held in high esteem.

Terry was an excellent and enthusiastic Teacher! For the past decade he personally conducted and led annual Webster Leadership training courses for adults and outstanding high school seniors. This covered almost a year of in services and introduced individuals to the history of Minden beginning back in 1935 and to the present day to include key community infrastructure.

Terry loved children! He earned kudos from the March of Dimes on a state level for

his efforts on behalf of babies and children in need and served many years at all levels of that organization.

Terry lived for continually beautifying our City...often seen out working with the city folks on our residents behalf. Creating venues both inside and outside for weddings, parties and various functions.

And, I would be remiss if I did not mention his love for animals. From our First Dog, "Ambassadeur", Terry was a caring and devoted advocate for animal lovers. One of his enduring and ongoing projects was constructing a new Animal Shelter in Minden.

No matter which Board or organization I had the pleasure of serving with him on, he was always a gracious, professional and conscientious member and an "Energizer Bunny" who kept all on our toes.

In closing, he was my friend and always there. I am better off for knowing him. I loved him and Debbie.

(MANDI SILLS HART, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR MINDEN MEDICAL CENTER) Mayor Terry Gardner was my friend. He loved my crazy, most of the time just shaking his head and laughing at me or spouting something off even more smart allec than me. He also loved my kids, always including them in all the campaign fun! He had a heart for Min-

den and wanted nothing more than for the rest of the world to see Minden as he saw it! Those born and raised in Minden do not truly appreciate Minden in all her glory. As transplants, Terry and I both understood how special Minden is! He gave of himself fully to make Minden better for all of us and our children who he loved so much. He sometimes let his alligator mouth overload his hummingbird butt, but that was Terry. You never had to wonder where you stood or what he thought. Let us remember and celebrate all the good Terry saw in Minden and all the good Terry did for Minden. I will miss my friend and his love for our community and his love for the people like me that get to enjoy all his hard work he poured into it. Well done, Terry! Please pray for my friend Debbie in the days, weeks, and months as she navigates this world without him by her side.

(LINDA MILLER, TGS EMPLOYEE) I worked for Terry for over 22 years. He was all about helping other people — taking care of people. He was one of the best people I've ever known. Terry was just a great person

(ANN DEMALINE, TGS EMPLOYEE) Terry was known for his generosity, helpfulness, and quick action in a situation that needed someone to take charge and get things done. He will be missed.

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Glenbrook more than adequately prepared me for what I'd now consider "real life". I was able to participate in numerous activities, sports, and clubs that perhaps I would not have been able to had I attended a larger school. In business, especially in a smaller community, I consider a well-rounded individual to be the ultimate asset. Glenbrook's intimate atmosphere allowed (and sometimes forced) me to develop those skills with both my peers and the adults involved with the school.

— Marshall Harper, Business Owner, Class of 2000

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