

Minden
Press-Herald

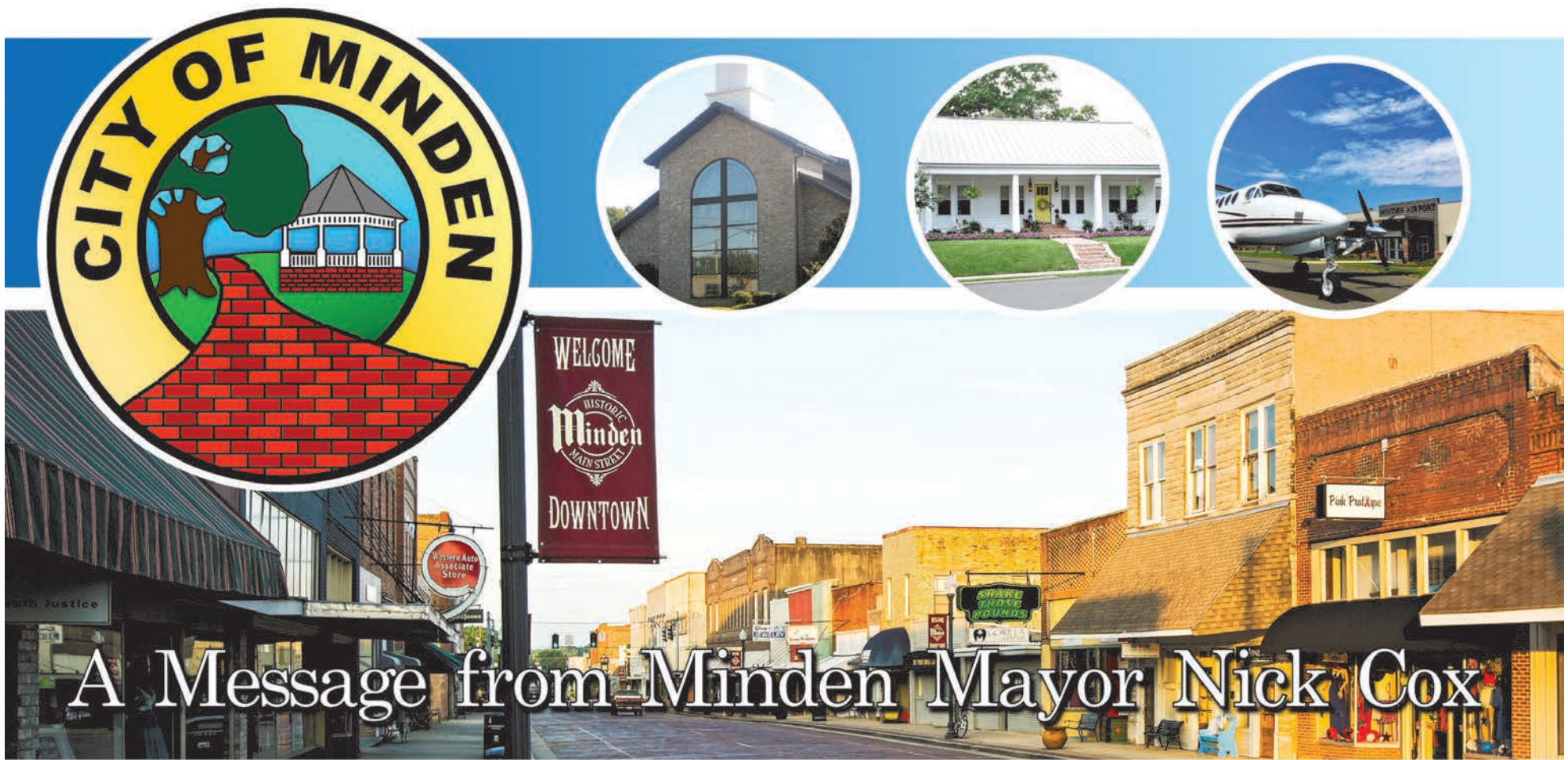
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Minden Profile

March 2023



A Community Review Published
by the
Minden Press-Herald



“I think that you would be hard-pressed to find a better place to call home than Minden, Louisiana. I’ve lived in Minden all my life and with every year that passes, the list of reasons why I love my home only gets longer and longer.

When talking about what makes Minden special, you could point to our local events and festivals that take place all throughout the year, our churches, and our local restaurants & businesses; all of these would be right. More than anything else, what I think makes this place special are the people who choose to call this place home.

There are many people in this City who go to great lengths to start fundraisers and charities with many others behind them always more than willing to support a good cause. We are blessed to have so many people that will take time out of their day, food out of their pantries, and money out of their wallets as long as they know it will help someone else in need.

In many ways, this year represents the start of a new chapter for the City of Minden. With a new Mayor, City Council, and Chief of Police, Minden is heading forward with a fresh start. New ideas, prosperity, and friendly faces and conversation are just a few of the numerous great things offered by the newly-elected officials of Minden. Though an ever-changing, growing city, its characteristic charm will remain.

I’m happy to say that I’m optimistic about our city’s future. I’ve only been Mayor for a short while now, but even within that limited time, I’ve seen new opportunities for Minden everywhere I’ve looked. Not only do we have great opportunities, but we have people who can turn those opportunities into reality.

These are just a few of the reasons, on top of many others that I do not have room to list, why I, Nick Cox, Mayor of the City of Minden, choose to call the Friendliest City in the South my home.”



Mayor Nick Cox



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ECONOMY PROFILE 2023

The Villas at Spanish Court are open for business

The Villas at Spanish Court are finally completed and ready for guests. The Villas, located on Union Street near Minden High, were built around 1931 by F.C. McClanahan.

“According to a news clipping from 1931, they were the most state-of-the-art apartments in the state of Louisiana,” said Sara McDaniel, owner of the Villas and Simply Southern Cottage. A former owner had stated that the villas fell into disuse in the 1980s. They had sat vacant until McDaniel breathed new life into these quaint apartments, turning them into stylish short-term rentals with designer decor.

“They all have a name,” said McDaniel as she gave the grand tour. “This one is Laura. It was sponsored by Laura Ashley, so that means that there’s Laura Ashley wallpaper, the art, the pillows, the rug, the bedding, the kitchen dishes. All that is sponsored by Laura Ashley. So when a guest looks online, they can choose a villa according to what design aesthetic they want.

“The Annie is sponsored by Annie Selke — I know the core style isn’t for everybody, but it’s about the experience,” said McDaniel.

Some of the units are more calm and neutral like the Piper, which also contains designer rugs from McDaniel’s own collection, and some are more beachy and tropical like the Cindy. All of the units have WiFi and access to a patio with a fire pit and string lights.

“I can’t decide which one’s my favorite,” McDaniel said.

Because these buildings had been vacant for about 40 years, a huge amount of work was required to bring

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald



PHOTOS BY HECTOR MANUEL SANCHEZ

them back to life. “It had asbestos, lead paint, there was a lot of termite damage, so we had to rebuild the studs,” said McDaniel. “That’s one reason why this is so expensive, because you have to remediate the right way.”

Much effort went into saving or replicating the historic architectural features of the buildings such as the fireplaces, cabinets, doors, and mantels. She was able to save the original bathtubs and tilework.

McDaniel is also really excited about her great staff. “We have such an amazing staff,” she said. “I got so lucky. I hired a recruiter and did a nation-wide search for an innkeeper/property manager, and I found somebody in Heflin. And she’s perfect! The moral of that story is ‘look in your own backyard.’”

The Villas at Spanish Court have been featured projects over the past year in both Cottages & Bungalows magazine as well as American Farmhouse Style magazine. In fact, the Piper is showcased on the front cover of the February/March 2023 issue of American Farmhouse Style magazine and “The Laura” is on the cover of the February/March 2023 issue of Cottages and Bungalows.

◀ CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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Spanish Court

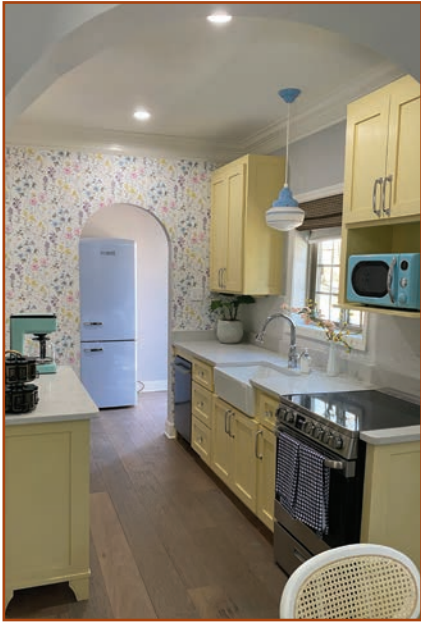
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McDaniel is planning to have an open house on March 24 and 25. “Chef Jodie Martin and Chef Blake Jackson from Shreveport are teaming up for ‘S’mores & More’ on March 24th, which will be an exclusive private event to tour the villas. There will be a progressive, charcuterie dinner through each of the eight villas capped off with a s’mores station. Landry’s Vineyards will be on hand for a wine tasting. Ryan Miller, the 2021 recipient of the American Songwriter of the Year award, will provide live music. All proceeds from this event will support the 2024 Minden St. Jude Auction. The next day, 12 to 6 p.m., I will be hosting another Simply Southern Saturday, and people will be able to tour the villas. Saturday proceeds will support Louisiana Family and Teen Challenge. We’ll have door prizes at both events including a Villas weekend getaway, Mellanni sheet sets, and more,” said McDaniel.

Bookings recently opened and McDaniel has reservations from North Dakota, Montana, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and even a few staycations from right here in Minden so far.

“I am thrilled and honored to provide a boutique-style short term rental experience in our town,” says McDaniel.

To reserve your stay at The Villas at Spanish Court, visit mindenstays.com.



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Our residents enjoy a very active social life with our daily activities and wonderful Activities Directors. We have many volunteers from the community. Just to name a few: Young Women's Service Club, Eastern Stars, First Baptist Church Minden, Pleasant Valley Methodist Church, New Light Baptist Church, Greater St. Paul Baptist Church, Red

Blooms, our local VFW, Webster Parish Library, Glenbrook and multiple Hospices and Home Healths in the community. We host holiday parades in the halls, show movies on the big screen and have karaoke parties. The facility hosts several clubs for residents including Sportsmans Club, Garden Club, ArtsnHearts Club and also have Cooking with Nat as well as Themed days throughout the year. Last year we had Carnival Day, Fall Festivals, Spring Flings and Deer hunting to mention a few. Visit our Facebook page and follow us to see all the different activities our residents enjoy. (Town & Country Health & Rehab)

Town & Country Health & Rehab administrative staff are local to our area. We are from the Webster, Claiborne and Bienville Parish Communities. Our love and compassion for our community goes all the way to our roots in the community. Our staff has a combined vision for our residents to receive the best care and make sure all needs are met. Stop by and see us some time and ask for a tour. We'd love to show you around our semi-private and private rooms.



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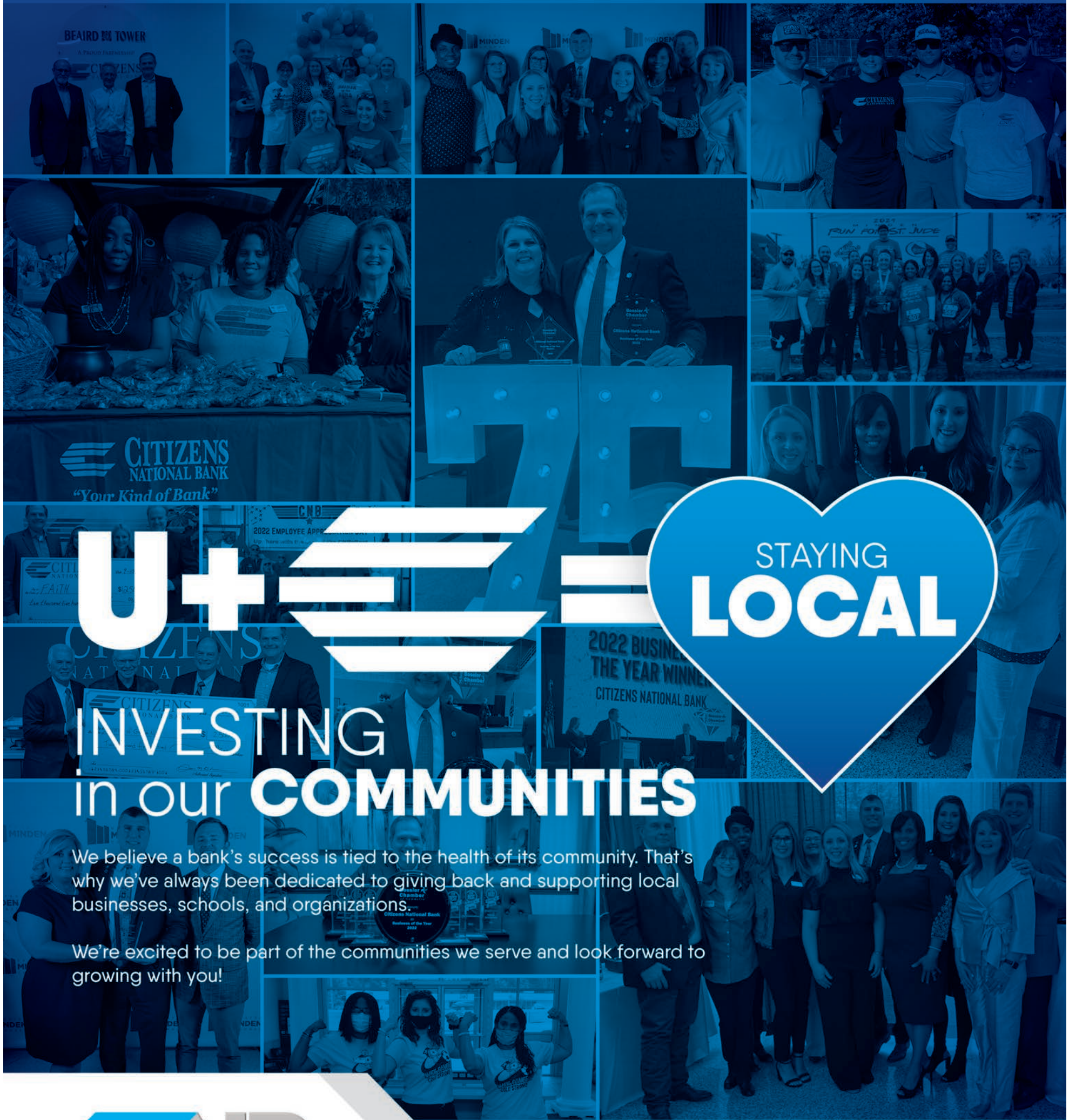
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New housing development coming to Minden

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

Millwood Landing

A new housing subdivision, named Millwood Landing, will be coming soon to the Minden area. The project is being developed by Micah Hanson, Senior Vice-President at b1Bank, and Chad Still, owner of Timberland Services LLC.

“Chad Still and I started a real estate holding company in 2008. We’ve purchased and sold several properties through the years,” said Micah Hanson. “The housing supply in Minden is limited.

The diverse geography, Kisatchie National Forest and Camp Minden are all unique attributes of South Webster Parish. However, this can create obstacles for new home builders.”

Millwood Landing will be sited on Hwy 532, between I-20 and Hwy 80. This location was carefully selected with several factors in mind.

“The property location was chosen due to its proximity to the city of Minden and its ease of access to Interstate 20,” Hanson said. “Allowing homeowners

who may work either to the east or west of Webster Parish a quick commute each day.

“This is considered Minden and is outside the city limits. Electricity will be provided by Entergy via underground service. CenterPoint Energy will provide natural gas. Water will be provided by the Dixie Overland Water System.”

The property name was chosen as a salute to the new sawmill that Hunt Forest Products is building in Bienville Parish.

“The new lumber mill currently under construction in Taylor, Louisiana, is something we feel will spur economic growth in the Minden area. We choose this name to give recognition for the positive impact this new industry will have,” Hanson said.

Millwood Landing will consist of 52 lots, each at least 1 acre in size, as well as green areas and a small family park. Pricing is going to start in the low \$60,000’s and go to the high \$70,000’s.

Once the weather allows road construction to begin, the roads should be finished in 60-90 days. After that, the lots will be surveyed and available for sale.

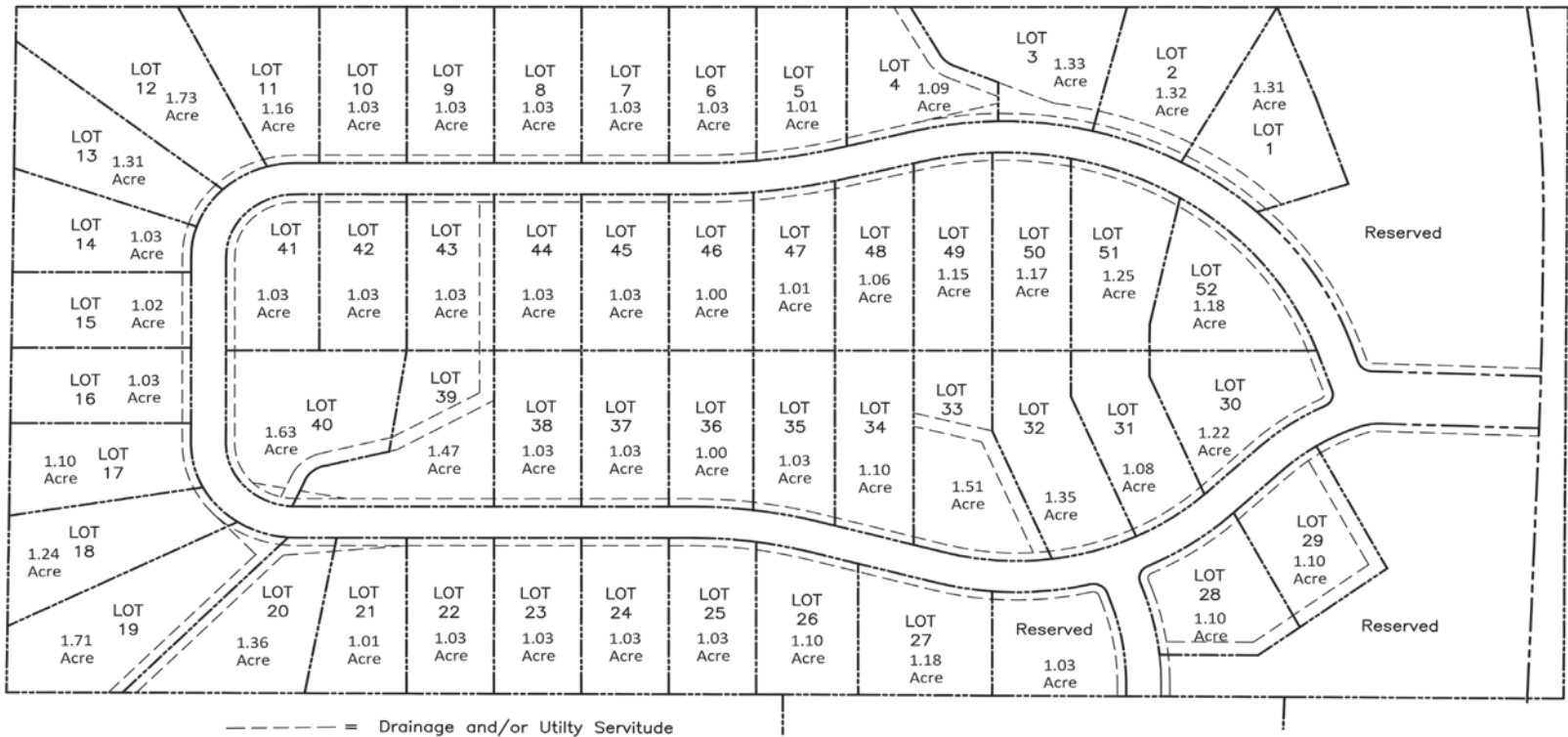
“We have a list of potential buyers to contact on a first come first serve basis,” Hanson said. “Anyone with interest can contact either of us directly. We are also available to give tours of the site to anyone before the work begins. This will answer any questions that potential buyers may have concerning the “buildability” or appearance of the lots.

“We are currently working with our attorney on the subdivision covenants. We’ll begin preselling lots once covenants are finalized and filed.”

Once you purchase a lot, you can hire your preferred construction company to build your new home.

“Purchasers will be able to use their own contractors,” Hanson said. “Plans will have to be approved by the Architectural Control Committee before construction begins. We also have talked to several local builders considering lots for spec house construction.

“Our intentions are to develop a clean, safe, family-friendly atmosphere for homeowners of all ages,” said Hanson.



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SIBLEY IS PREPARING TO GROW

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

The mayor of Sibley, Jimmy Williams, is excited about the new housing development that the Town of Sibley is creating on 160 acres near Calloway Corners.

“We have bought some land, and we’re starting a subdivision,” said Mayor Williams. “We’re hoping everything gets going by April. Right now, it looks like we’re going to have 21 lots. We’re going to see how that goes, and then we can expand it. I’m really excited about that because we don’t have a lot of places where people can build; we’re kind of landlocked. This gives us an opportunity to expand Sibley. Of course, there will be people who’re not excited, but my philosophy is, either you’re growing or you’re dying.”

At this time, the town plans to just sell lots and let the homeowners choose their builders. The planned lot sizes will be around ¼ to ½ acre.

“The town will be selling lots, that’s all we’re going to do. There are some developers that are interested in it but, right now, we’re going to develop these and see what happens,” said Mayor Williams.

“We’ve had a lot of people calling wanting to know when it’s going to open and how much it’s going to be. We haven’t determined that yet, but it’s going to be cheaper

than what they’re doing over in Haughton. We’re not trying to make money on it, we just want people to come in. I’m very excited about that.”

The project is in its preliminary stages with surveyors working to create a topographical map of the area but, weather permitting, they hope to start selling lots by spring or early summer.

Another big project that Sibley has in the works is a major water system overhaul including consolidating with Saltworks Water System which is located just south of Sibley.

“We got a \$5 million grant to redo our water system,” Williams said. “We’ll be taking on Saltworks Water System. It’s going to be completely redone. We’re putting in green sand filters to take the minerals out of the water, drilling a new well. It’s really going to help our water system. We’ve got a lot going on.”

“The one we’re taking on [Saltworks] is going to be completely redone. All new pipes, everything. So it’ll be brand new.”

The municipality was required to take on another water system to qualify for the grant under the Water Sector Program. This helps to consolidate water systems so that grant-money improvements cover a larger area. There are many small water systems in Webster Parish that are in dire need of improvements.



COMMUNITY PROFILE 2023

Fitness court coming to Victory Park

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

The preliminary work has begun on the new Fitness Court®, a type of outdoor gym, in Victory Park, though the erratic weather has caused major delays. The court, which is being built on one of the existing tennis courts, is

expected to be completed in May. The fitness court will be an open-air, open-concept gym featuring 10-12 stations where a wide variety of exercises can be performed. Each station will feature a QR code that will allow users to access the recommended

exercises using their cell phones. “You can go up to it with your phone and scan the QR code on the wall, and it can tell you, ‘Station One, these are the various exercises you can do, Station Two, these are other exercises you can do,’ so it’s built-in for everybody,” said Mike Aguilar, Assistant Director of Minden Parks and Recreation. “It’s even handicapped accessible. Anyone can work out. It’s an open concept, so you can just come and go.”

A therapy team from Minden Medical Center, as well as staff from the REC, will be getting “ambassador certified” to be able to offer instruction on using the new fitness court.

“Our plan is, once a month or every other month, to have a day when we’ll have Fitness Day. I’ve been talking to Minden Medical, and the obesity rate in Minden is so high, so we’re trying to get people active and into the parks. Victory Park is one of our most popular parks, and it’s centrally located in the city, so that’s why we picked that park.”

There will also be two pickleball (a modified form of tennis) courts created in Victory Park using an existing tennis court as its base. Due to the size of the slab, these courts will be set up length-wise instead of side-by-side.

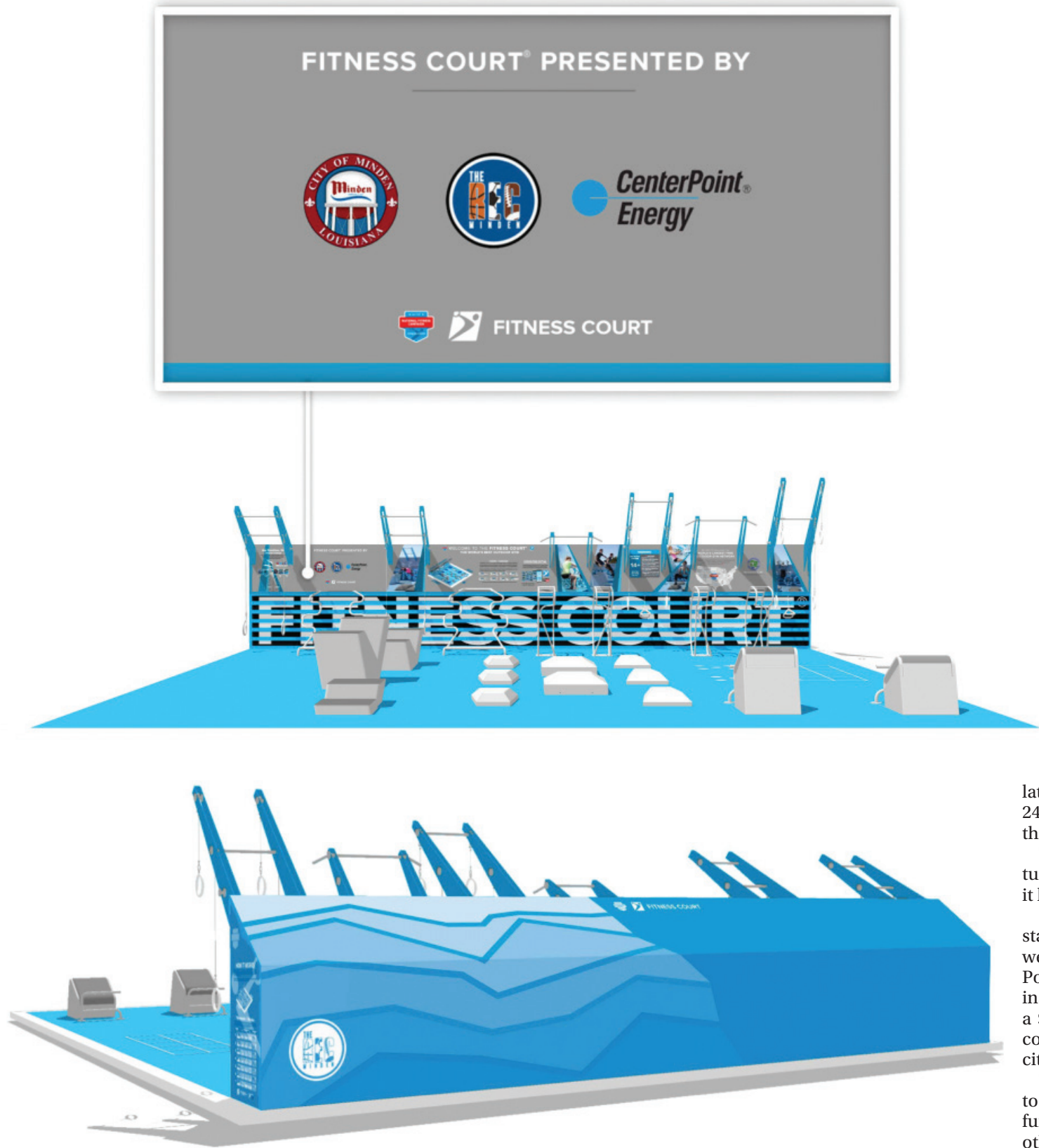
“We thought we could cut the tennis court in half and have them side-by-side, but we’re going to have to go to length because you have to have 44 feet, and it’s only 40 feet,” said Aguilar. “So, while the adults are playing pickleball or working out, the kids can play in the park.”

It was hoped that the existing slabs would be suitable to build directly on, but a 40 by 40-foot section had to be repaired and reinforced in preparation for the installation. For the installation to work properly, they will need at least 24 hours guaranteed to be above 50°, hence the delay.

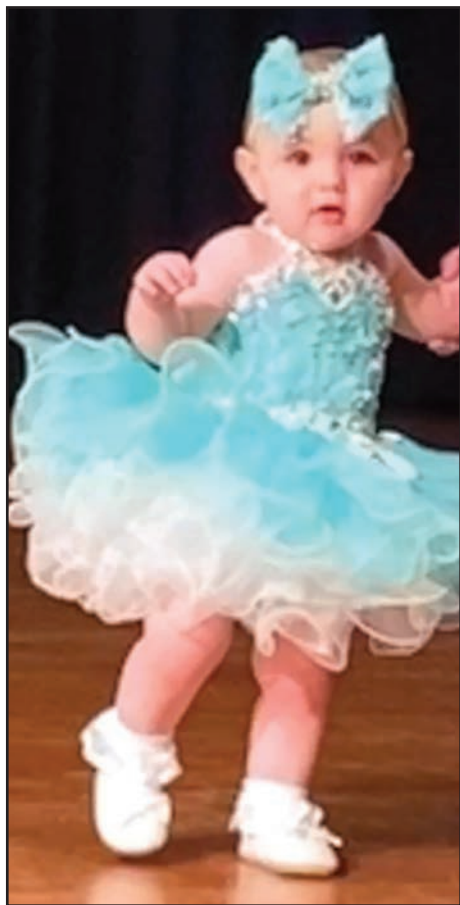
This fitness court will provide great opportunities to people who want to work out. And it has been paid almost entirely with grants.

“Rocke (the former director of the REC) started this. The National Fitness Campaign... we got a \$30,000 grant from them. CenterPoint Energy gave us a \$25,000 grant for the installation. And Senator Mills’ office gave us a \$100,000 grant. McInnis Construction also contributed. Everybody has their part. So the city is only out \$12,000ish.”

These are going to be wonderful additions to Victory Park which should encourage more fun and fitness. The upcoming upgrades to other local parks will be featured in a future article in the Minden Press Herald.



Little Miss Minden 2023



The Baby Miss Minden division — for newborn to 17 month old girls — was won by 14-month-old Hayslee Roden.



The Toddler Miss Minden division — for 18 month to 3 year old girls — was won by 3-year-old Brenley Berdan.



The Tiny Miss Minden division — for 4 to 6 year old girls — was won by 5-year-old Kristlyn Carter.



The Mini Miss Minden division — for 7 to 9 year old girls — was won by Hadli Beck.



The Pre-teen Miss Minden division — for 10 to 12 year old girls — was won by 11-year-old Presley Wood.



The Junior Miss Minden division — for 13 to 14 year old girls — was won by 14-year-old Kynzie Smith.

The Little Miss Minden pageant, hosted by the Young Womens' Service Club, was held at the Civic Center on January 7, 2023. This pageant was open to newborn girls all the way up to 14 year olds. The Little Miss Minden pageant is a precursor for the Miss Minden Scholarship Competition which is celebrating its 70th year this year.

The Baby Miss Minden division — for newborn to 17 month old girls — was won by 14-month-old Hayslee Roden.

The Toddler Miss Minden division — for 18 month to 3 year old girls — was won by 3-year-old Brenley Berdan.

The Tiny Miss Minden division — for 4 to 6 year old girls — was won by 5-year-old Kristlyn Carter.

The Mini Miss Minden division — for 7 to 9 year old girls — was won by Hadli Beck.

The Pre-teen Miss Minden division — for 10 to 12 year old girls — was won by 11-year-old Presley Wood.

And the Junior Miss Minden division — for 13 to 14 year old girls — was won by 14-year-old Kynzie Smith.

Karlee Zaldivar did an excellent job as Mistress of Ceremonies, bringing energy and humor to the pageant, and Anna Claire Lemoine, Miss Minden 2022, and Courtney Patterson, Miss Spirit of Fashing 2022, were on hand to crown the winners.

Proceeds from this event are used to help send Miss Minden contestants to the state competition.

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald



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Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Teachers *still enjoy* freedoms of religion

During the October school board meeting, Chris Plants addressed the board regarding the religious freedoms of teachers in Webster Parish.

Plants, a member of the Christian group named Men of Courage, reported that teachers were coming to him with concerns regarding their religious freedoms in their workplaces. “Teachers started coming to me saying they couldn’t put their Bibles on their desks, and they wanted to,” said Plants.

Plants spoke passionately about his Christian views, saying: “Our God gave us the greatest commandment — to love our God with all our heart, all our mind, and all our soul. That means to worship Him all the time, and to pray for Him all the time. You can’t go into a government facility and say, ‘I’m not going to pray for Him now. I’m not going to pray for Him for these eight hours.’”

“Johnny [Rowland], you’ve already told me one time today, and Robin Tucker put it online, that it was just a bad miscommunication. I hope that it is. You can have Bibles at your desk? You can have crosses around your neck? And you can pray anytime that you want?”

Superintendent Rowland replied, “That’s correct.”

Rowland continued: “They can have a

Bible on their desk, they can carry a Bible as long as — and this is according to the court order — as long as there’s other things on the desk, which any teacher will have. They can wear religious-themed jewelry. And teachers can pray at school, they can pray with each other at school. Our students can pray at school. And I’ll tell you what we have seen. We have seen, out of our students — which is a miracle, see, the Lord

does work through bad situations — we have seen in Webster Parish attendance increase at FCA meetings,

See You at the Pole, bible study groups. We’re seeing much more participation after we were sued than before. Our students know their rights, and our students are saying, ‘We’re not going to be denied.’ Our employees are learning their rights. I need to do a better job as superintendent at giving the specifics.”

In summary, teachers’ freedom of religion and freedom of speech are not infringed upon by their workplace. The same applies for students. The only real stipulation is that any religious activities that students engage in on school property must be student led, not teacher led.

The school board meets on the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald



Men of Courage praying outside the School Board Offices.

AMBER MCDOWN/MINDEN PRESS-HERALD

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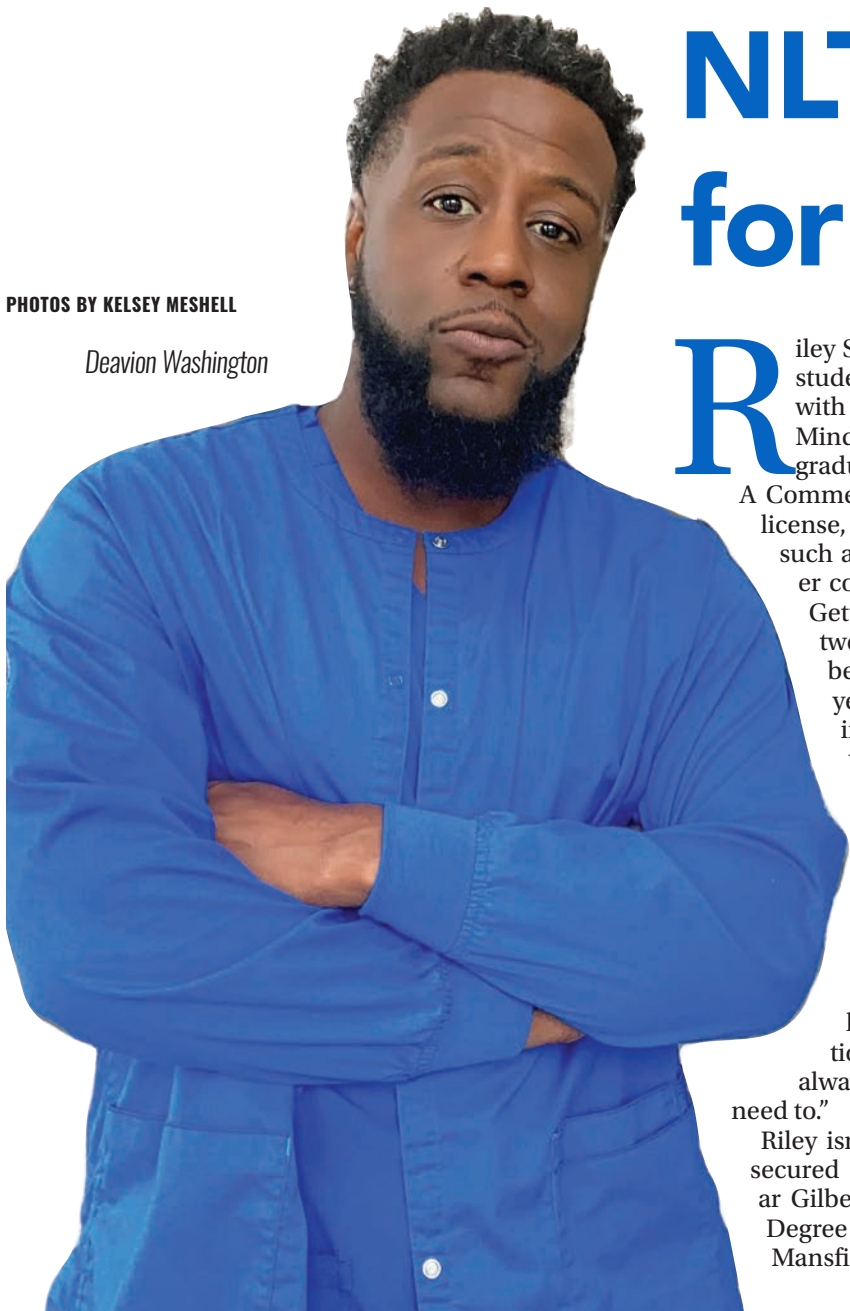
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NLTCC equips students for the future

BY KELSEY MESHELL
Special to the Minden Press-Herald

PHOTOS BY KELSEY MESHELL

Deavion Washington



Riley Streetman is one of many NLTCC students who will begin his career with a leg up on his peers. A local from Minden High School, Riley will be graduating this spring with his Class A Commercial Driver's License. With this license, he'll be able to operate vehicles such as tractor-trailers, truck and trailer combinations, flatbeds, and more. Getting his CDL before he turns twenty-one means that Riley won't be able to travel out of state just yet. However, he has a local job in the city of Minden that will be waiting for him as soon as he gets his license. Riley has already received a raise at his new job—all because he will be starting out with his Class A CDL. This, and his young age, will set him apart from his coworkers. "NLTCC has good instructors that are easy to get along with," he says, thankful for the education he receives on campus. "I can always talk to my instructors when I need to."

Riley isn't the only NLTCC student who secured a job after graduation. La'Stylar Gilbert graduated with her Technical Degree in Practical Nursing from our Mansfield campus last December. Af-

ter graduating, she accepted a position at Oschner LSU Health Academic Medical Center, and now looks back fondly on her time as a student. "I was hesitant about going to a community college, but in the end, this experience changed my life," She shares. "At some universities, you don't always have access to one on one instruction. At NLTCC, this was not the case. Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Geoghagan will always hold a special place in my heart. As a class, we went through many different obstacles. These two ladies made sure we made it to the finish line by not only encouraging us, but also never giving up on us. I'm forever grateful for them and their support!"

Deavion Washington shares a similar sentiment about his time at the Minden campus. Another 2022 graduate who received his Technical Diploma in Practical Nursing last December, Deavion currently works as an LPN at Heritage Nursing Center in his hometown of Haynesville. He happily remembers his teachers at NLTCC. "My teachers provided me with knowledge and a sense of comfort. They taught me the correct way to do things, and helped prepare me for life outside of school," He says. "They're still there for me to this day, and give me advice when I need it. I'd be lost without them. They're my guardian angels."

Success stories like Riley, La'Stylar, and Deavion's are not uncommon here at NLTCC. By providing quality workforce training and inspiring our students to achieve their career goals, we provide a competitive edge in today's global economy. We are proud to serve our community and prepare our graduates for the world of work in high wage, high skill, and high demand fields.

More information about our curricular offerings can be found at nltcc.edu or through our Facebook page. Let NLTCC be a part of your story.



Apaches top Pels, push win streak to 15

The enormity of the game could be seen by the crowd at the stadium.

Glenbrook took the state's best 14-game win into Thursday's night's home game against Homer with the District 1-1A at stake for the winner.

And after a hardfought defensive slugfest, make it 15 straight victories as Glenbrook walked away with arguably its biggest win ever as the Apaches defeated defending state champion Homer 21-14 before an overflow crowd at Apache Stadium.

The win gave Glenbrook (9-0, 6-0) the District 1-1A crown while Homer fell to 6-3 and 4-1.

Only a year after joining the Louisiana High School Athletic Association and in its first year of LHSAA playoff eligibility, the Apaches showed they will be a force to be reckoned with once the Division IV select school playoffs begin.

Glenbrook coach David Feaster knows the win was one of the biggest ever for his team.

"It's difficult to say, but probably pretty high up," Feaster said. "That's really probably best looked at through the eyes of the students — the athletes as well as the nonathletes. And the supporters. Glenbrook has never seen a crowd even close to anything we had this time."

"A year ago we played Homer (a 36-21 home loss) and they told me it was by far the biggest crowd ever at Glenbrook. And I told them that they had no idea what was coming. From 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. we were literally turning cars away. There was no place to park. The people were parking a mile away and walking in. It was great."

The game was a defensive slugfest from the get-go.

Decked out in black jerseys and pants, the Apaches drove as deep as Homer's 17-yard line in the first quarter before turning the ball over on downs.



Glenbrook struck first in the second quarter when a Tre Kent interception helped set up a Ty Feaster quarterback option scoring scamper that put the Apaches up 7-0 with 4:04 remaining in the first half.

But Homer countered with a late second-quarter score to send the teams into the locker room tied 7-7 at halftime.

"It was maybe five minutes left in the first half when the interception gave us the ball back," Feaster said. "We went down

and scored, and then they went down and scored. They chewed a lot of time off the clock early. We had only two or three possessions in the first half."

"So when we walked back out on the field at the end of halftime, it felt like we were walking out to finish the world championship. It had come down to this."

The defensive battle continued in the second half, with the Apaches going back on top 14-7 on a two-yard touchdown run by Maddox Mandino with 8:00 remaining in the third stanza.

Glenbrook had a chance to take a two-score lead a little later but missed on a 42-yard field goal attempt.

Homer countered on the ensuing drive and tied the game at 14-14 on a five-yard run by Andrevious Buggs with 45 seconds left in the third quarter.

Glenbrook moved back out

in front with 8:24 remaining as Feaster fired a 15-yard touchdown strike to Mandino for the game's final score, giving the Apaches the 21-14 advantage.

Homer took over at midfield with a little less than two minutes remaining, but Glenbrook's last of numerous sacks in the game on the final play sent the Apache Nation into celebration mode.

"We had some opportunities to put them away early. I didn't do a very good job of calling. We had chances but never got up by two scores. We missed a field goal that could have put us up by 10, we had stalled drives that could have put us up by 14."

"So it went down to the last play of the game. The defense just had to hang on and hold them off. Our defense played extremely physical. It was amazing."

Glenbrook will close out 2022 regular-season play next week as the Apaches play host to River Oaks, which stands at 2-7 and 0-4 after falling 54-6 at home Friday night to St. Frederick.

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Former Minden star Sneed is a Super Bowl champion

BY RUSSELL HEDGES

Minden Press-Herald

Former Minden High and Louisiana Tech star L'Jarvis Sneed is a Super Bowl champion.

There was some question about the third-year Kansas City Chiefs cornerback's status after being limited in practice Thursday with a reported knee injury. That came after he cleared concussion protocol after being injured in the AFC Championship Game.

But Sneed recorded three solo tackles and seven total in a 38-35 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl LVII on Sunday at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz.

He also was credited with two passes defended.

The Chiefs rallied from a 24-14 halftime deficit. Harrison Butker's 27-yard field goal with 8 seconds

left broke at 35-all tie.

Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes, who appeared to tweak an ankle injury just before halftime, complained 21 of 27 passes for 182 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions.

The Chiefs had 158 yards rushing led by Isaac Pacheco's 76 on 15 carries.

Philadelphia quarterback Jalen Hurts completed 27 of 38 passes for 304 yards and one touchdown with no interceptions.

He also rushed for 70 on 15 carries and scored three TDs. Hurts' one fumble was returned for a touchdown.

During the regular season, Sneed had 75 solo tackles and 33 assists, 3.5 sacks, three forced fumbles, one fumble recovery, three interceptions and 11 passes defended.

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Crimson Tide races past North Webster

Minden Quarterback Jakobe Jackson accounted for almost a third of his team's total yardage Friday night as he carried the Crimson Tide to a 39-27 win over North Webster at Baucum-Farrar Stadium.

Jackson ran wild for 224 yards and three touchdowns on 12 carries, averaging 18.7 yards per rush, with scoring scampers of 62, 88 and 56 yards.

He also connected on three-of-10 passes for 79 yards with one touchdown and one interception on the night.

North Webster struck first as Knights quarterback Collin McKenzie connected with Cooper Sanders on a 79-yard scoring strike at the 7:10 mark of the opening stanza to move out to a 7-0 lead.

Minden responded with three touchdowns over a 2:20 timespan.

On the first play from scrimmage after the ensuing kickoff, Jackson broke free on a 62-yard dash to paydirt that left the Minden trailing by one with 6:48 remaining in the first quarter after the point after kick attempt failed.

Minden was back at it 1:13 later as Jackson hit Jaylin Williams on a 34-yard touchdown pass that put the Crimson Tide on

top 13-7 after the PAT kick.

North Webster then fumbled the ball away deep in its own territory with Minden running back Daylen Robinson scoring on a four-yard run that left MHS ahead 18-7 at the 4:28 mark of the first quarter after the PAT kick failed.

The teams then traded long touchdown runs, with Sanders scoring on a 52-yards before Jackson called his own number on an option play and raced 88 yards to paydirt to put the Crimson Tide up 26-14 with 2:22 remaining in the first half.

North Webster cut that lead to 26-20 on

a Jakobe Lawson 72-yard scoring scamper at the 3:30 mark of the third quarter, but on the next play from scrimmage after the kickoff, Jackson ran wild again, this time speeded 56 yards to put the Tide up 33-20.

McKenzie's 31-yard scoring strike to Gregory Davis cut the MHS advantage with 33-27 heading into the fourth quarter.

Minden added one last score with 55 seconds remaining in the contest as the Tide moved to 1-2 on the year while North Webster fell to 0-3.

Robinson ran 79 yards on 12 carries for the Crimson Tide while Cameron Mitchell added up 28 yards on four carries and Brian Swan chipped in with 24 yards on four carries.

North Webster's rushing attack was led by Lawson with 110 yards and one touchdown on 10 carries while Sanders had nine rushes for 79 yards and Braedon Robertson added 76 yards on 14 carries.

McKenzie connected on 12-for-21 passes for 214 yards and two touchdowns with two interceptions.

Minden will play host to North DeSoto on Friday for the Crimson Tide's Homecoming while North Webster will host Richwood.





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MINDEN 10U ALL-STARS CLAIM DIXIE SOFTBALL WORLD SERIES TITLE

ALEXANDRIA — Mother Nature nearly ended Wednesday night's Dixie World Series Championship Game for Minden's 10U X-Play All-Stars before it ever got started.

But then she also helped Minden — known at the DWS as Team Louisiana — to a 7-6 walk-off win over Alabama in extra innings to earn the World Series title.

Heavy rains and thunderstorms ended just in time for the game to get underway at its scheduled start time even though the wet stuff continued falling for much of the game.

"We didn't know if we were going to play," assistant coach Marcus Harmon said. "We went ahead and started our batting practice and getting warm, and the game pretty much started out at the scheduled time — 5:30 (p.m.). It was misting rain and rained throughout the game pretty much."

And Minden jumped off to a quick 3-0 lead in the bottom of the first after Ella Wood shut down Team Alabama with a three-up, three down pitching performance in the top half of the stanza.

But the light rain that kept falling caused some pitching issues for Minden in the top of the second inning as Alabama bounced back to take a 6-3 lead

thanks to a slew of walks.

"It was wet and (Ella) and the catcher were having problems — I think the parents panicked more than the team and coaches did," Harmon said.

Madisyn Jernigan came in and pitched the third and fourth innings before Minden came back and added three more runs, pushing the game into extra innings.

Then the Minden coaches made the move to put Wood back out in the circle to pitch the top of the fifth, and she again shut down Team Alabama.

"We saw that she had calmed down and we told her we'd keep the balls dry and to just go out there and do her best," Harmon said.

With two outs in the bottom of the fifth inning, Kinzie Pamintuan reached first base, and then surprisingly made the move to steal second.

"We knew Kinzie wasn't the fastest base runner," Harmon said. "But I knew I had to get her into scoring position."

So Parmintuan took off, but started her slide early. But because the field was so wet, she looked like she was on a slip and slide and glided safely into second base.

"That was huge," Huddleston said of the stolen base. "That was all Marcus Harmon, the first base coach. I didn't tell her

to go. Marcus told her to go and thank God it was wet, because she wouldn't have made it to the base if it was dry. We got lucky there."

"That was huge," said Minden head coach Chase Huddleston about the stolen base. "That was all Marcus Harmon, the first base coach. I didn't tell her to go. Marcus told her to go and thank God it was wet, because she wouldn't have made it to the base if it was dry. We got lucky there."

That brought Wood, who had blasted a three-run homer against Alabama in a previous game, to the plate.

"I just knew we had a girl coming up to bat with two outs that could put it over the fence — (Huddleston said. "I'm really surprised they threw that last pitch to her because she had three balls already called. If I would have been their coach I would have walked her."

"But the pitcher threw one up there and Ella rode it. I couldn't be more proud of her."

And just like that, the Minden girls were dancing in the rain after winning a Dixie World Series championship.

"We set this goal back when we started," Huddleston said. "We went through district undefeated. Then as we went to state

I started realizing we had the opportunity to go through state undefeated."

"And when we came out of state undefeated, that's when we made the goal, or I did — we've got a new goal. We didn't want to just win the World Series, we wanted to be the only team to have done it on all three levels — district, state, and World Series. And this team stepped up to the plate and did it. It's something very special."

Even though the team consisted of girls only 9 and 10 years old, experience played a role in their championship.

"The core group of girls on this team we started with in SweetTeens," Harmon said. "My daughter is nine, and we started this when she was 6. We were district champs and then state runner-up that first year."

"Then the next year was the COVID year — 2020. We didn't have a district or a state championship, but they did hold a World Series out in Alabama. And we put a team together and went and played in the World Series out there and finished third. It was a lot of the same girls, but two years ago."

Harmon said he believes that 2020 World Series experience for much of this year's Minden team played a big role in Wednesday's championship win.

"I think it absolutely helped them," Harmon said. "A lot of these girls play travel ball — 11 out of 12 girls play travel ball and nine of out the 12 were on our travel ball team this year. I think a lot of that helped as far as their softball IQ and their understanding and knowledge of what to do in gametime situations because of that experience. It definitely paid dividends for these girls."

Those dividends brought Minden the World Series championship — with a little help from Mother Nature.

"It just all worked out for the best," Huddleston said. "When Ella was out there pitching at the start of the game, it was raining pretty hard. Alabama did all their scoring without any hits. If it wouldn't have been raining I think we would have shut them out. But it ended up being a very exciting game."





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

The Minden St. Jude Auction was a big success this weekend, with people donating not only locally but from all over the world. People participated from all 50 states and 49 different countries. The internet alone broke over \$1 million in donations, with the grand total raising \$2,030,013 for the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Besides the main auction there were several events including the Minden St. Jude Chili Cook-off which raised \$9,422, the Young Women's Service Club's Kid Day which raised \$2,220, and the Minden Run for St. Jude which raised a whopping \$89,500. On top of the events, enticing raffle items also pulled in a lot of support. Some of the big raffle winners include Sara Ryubal winning the Playhouse, three Partner In Hope raffles including Glenn Warren winning the \$5000 cash prize, Allen Wiggins winning a trip to Disney World for four, and Greg Story winning the big screen TV. Joey Elawadi won the Grand Prize of a 2023 GMC Yukon.



Doyline gym renamed to honor late Coach James Roach



Doyline basketball coach Michael Normand had been working on a secret for years. And last week, that secret was unveiled during a ceremony honoring late Doyline coach James Roach, who died on Aug. 6, by naming the Doyline High School Gym after him.

Roach coached at Doyline for 30 years before retiring in 1994 and led the Panthers basketball team to a state championship in 1967 while also earning four state runner-up accolades.

“You hear all the stories about him being a competitor and his intensity in the locker room and during games,” Normand said during the ceremony “And at the time it amazed me how that person could also be the person I grew to know that could be such a kind and gentle soul, and I guess that’s what made him special — the fact he could flip that switch from competitor to husband, father, grandfather — which is what most of us coaches would like to do, but most of us fall short.

Normand said he realized Roach’s competitiveness when he asked Roach to coach a team during an alumni game at Doyline five or six years ago.

“It was all fun and game before the game with people asking what players were going to pull hamstrings and who was going to be in what hospital tomorrow,” Normand said. “And then the game started. The first half was fun and games.

“About the third quarter I started seeing the intensity pick up. ... It ended up being a one-point ball game. I couldn’t tell you who won that game, but then I realized — could we add that to his total? I realized then how competitive he was. That fire does not go away.”

Neither did Normand’s fire to honor the Doyline coaching legend.

“About 10 years ago I realized I wanted to do some things for some of the guys in this town I consider to be the Mount Rushmore of Doyline basketball,” Normand said. “Several years ago we retired Mr. Jerry Walker’s number. You see it on the wall back there. Last year we named our basketball tournament after Mr. Jimmy Stewart.

“What I had planned for Coach wasn’t as easy as what I had planned for those guys. What I planned for those guys, basically I could just make that decision. For what I had planned for Coach Roach took a couple of years because it needed school board approval. And as the process started, COVID struck and backed everything up.”

But last year the request was finally passed.

“That’s what I was hoping for because I was trying to keep it secret,” Normand said. “I had planned to do it on Oct. 27, the date of our jamboree and it happens to be our year to host it. We decided then to keep it secret from folks and then have a big celebration on Oct. 27. But the Lord doesn’t work on our time schedule.”

Doyline basketball players then brought in the signing officially renaming the facility as James Roach Gymnasium.

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● Reclaiming History ●

While city workers were preparing the area around the gazebo in Jacqueline Park early Tuesday morning, a thought-to-be-lost piece of history was found once again.

In Minden back in 1976, The Greater Minden Chamber chose to bury a time capsule as part of their bicentennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Buried in Jacqueline Park in October of '76, the time capsule contained all manner of memorabilia, artifacts, and other documentation of life in Minden and throughout the country during the 1970s. It was originally scheduled to be reopened 100 years later in 2076.

So how did it come to be lost? Roughly two decades ago the monument hosting the time capsule was vandalized. At the time it was assumed that the contents of the capsule had been removed as well. However, it turns out that there were two components to the capsule: the one buried deep below and another, more shallow component, buried directly under the monument. The shallow



Assumed to be lost time capsule gets found during renovations to the gazebo



PHOTOS BY WILL PHILLIPS/MINDEN PRESS-HERALD

low one was found after the monument had been vandalized, leaving many to believe that the time capsule had been retrieved. It wasn't until city employees were working around the gazebo, prepping it

for Minden's upcoming event Boots on the Boulevard, that the deeper component was found. While digging up some of the sidewalk around the gazebo, city employees happened upon an odd looking object.

After carefully excavating it and chipping away at the concrete surrounding it, the time capsule with the date 2/19/76 was uncovered. There was no date indicating that it was not supposed to be opened until 2076 on the capsule's surface, and curiosity got the best of those who found this long lost treasure.

Opening the capsule revealed many pictures, cassette tapes, books, and other tokens from the 1970s. Most notably, it contained a recording of a speech from the day it was buried, a pocketbook donated by one Tom Colton that is attached to a savings account that held \$50 at the time of burial, and a Bible donated by one Larry Reed.

The capsule and its contents were taken to the Dorcheat Museum, and the decision on what to do with them remains to be seen.

If the city employees hadn't dug as deeply as they did and had continued with their plans of pouring a four inch slab of concrete, this time capsule would never have been found. Whether it be luck, fate, or divine intervention, the powers-that-be saw fit to allow this piece of Minden's history to be rediscovered.



ROBINSON PUSHES TIDE PAST BTW

Entering the game needing a win to keep any playoff dreams alive, Minden High School and Crimson Tide running back Daylen Robinson took care of business Thursday night.

Robinson became the first MHS rusher to break the 1,000-yard rushing barrier for two straight seasons as his 133-yard performance on 10 carries pushed the Tide to a 43-26 District 1-4A win over Booker T. Washington at W.W. Williams Stadium.

Playing as one of the Crimson Tide's honorees on Senior Night, Robinson pushed his season rushing total to 1,026 yards, moving into third place on Minden's all-time career yards list behind the late Sammy Seamster and Raymond Tate.

Seamster, who passed away in the spring of 2019, went on to play at LSU and had been the last Crimson Tide running back to record back-to-back 1,000 rushing seasons for Minden in 1986 and '87.

Minden won big but trailed early, with BTW marching 60 yards on the opening drive to move on top 8-0 only 2:25 into the contest.

But the Crimson Tide countered with an 18-yard scoring scamper by Robinson to cut the Lions' lead to 8-6 after the two-point conversion kick attempt failed.

Booker T. Washington pushed its advantage to 14-6 late in the first quarter before the Crimson Tide surged back with three straight rushing touchdowns – an 11-yarder by Cameron Mitchell, a three-yarder by Robinson and a 17-yard by quarterback Jakobe Jackson to move out to a 30-14 lead at intermission.

Minden added a pair of second-half touchdowns on a 40-yard scoring strike from Jackson to Jaylin Williams with 3:25 remaining in the third quarter and a 18-yard run by Jackson at the 10:47 mark of the final stanza to build a 43-14 advantage before BTW added a pair of late scores.

Jackson finished with 88 rushing yards while completing six-of-nine passes for 100 yards.

Minden, 3-6 overall and 2-4 in District 1-4A, will close out regular-season play next week at Woodlawn-Shreveport, which also stands at 3-6 and 2-4 after losing 40-0 Friday night at Northwood.

The Crimson Tide will need a win next week along with a lot of help to reach the Division II Select School playoffs. Minden currently stands at No. 33 in GeauxPreps.com's power rankings heading into the final week of the season. layoff dreams alive, Minden High School and Crimson Tide running back Daylen Robinson took care of business Thursday night.

Robinson became the first MHS rusher to break the 1,000-yard rushing bar-

rier for two straight seasons as his 133-yard performance on 10 carries pushed the Tide to a 43-26 District 1-4A win over Booker T. Washington at W.W. Williams Stadium.

Playing as one of the Crimson Tide's honorees on Senior Night, Robinson pushed his season rushing total to 1,026 yards, moving into third place on Minden's all-time career yards list behind the late Sammy Seamster and Raymond Tate.

Seamster, who passed away in the spring of 2019, went on to play at LSU and had been the last Crimson Tide running back to record back-to-back 1,000 rushing seasons for Minden in 1986 and '87.

Minden won big but trailed early, with

BTW marching 60 yards on the opening drive to move on top 8-0 only 2:25 into the contest.

But the Crimson Tide countered with an 18-yard scoring scamper by Robinson to cut the Lions' lead to 8-6 after the two-point conversion kick attempt failed.

Booker T. Washington pushed its advantage to 14-6 late in the first quarter before the Crimson Tide surged back with three straight rushing touchdowns – an 11-yarder by Cameron Mitchell, a three-yarder by Robinson and a 17-yard by quarterback Jakobe Jackson to move out to a 30-14 lead at intermission.


Minden added a pair of second-half touchdowns on a 40-yard scoring strike from Jackson to Jaylin Williams with 3:25 remaining in the third quarter and a 18-

yard run by Jackson at the 10:47 mark of the final stanza to build a 43-14 advantage before BTW added a pair of late scores.

Jackson finished with 88 rushing yards while completing six-of-nine passes for 100 yards.

Minden, 3-6 overall and 2-4 in District 1-4A, will close out regular-season play next week at Woodlawn-Shreveport, which also stands at 3-6 and 2-4 after losing 40-0 Friday night at Northwood.

The Crimson Tide will need a win next week along with a lot of help to reach the Division II Select School playoffs. Minden currently stands at No. 33 in GeauxPreps.com's power rankings heading into the final week of the season.



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GOVERNMENT PROFILE 2023

Denise Edwards

celebrates
40 Years
at tax assessor's office

The Webster Parish Assessor's office recently hosted a celebration of Denise Edwards and her 40th anniversary working at the assessor's office. She began her career at the age of 16 when she started working in the assessor's office during the summers while working on her accounting degree from Louisiana Tech University. Since then, she has worked under every administration and now leads the office as the Assessor.

It is quite a feat to work at the same place in any career for 40 years. The immense appreciation of Denise and her work was on full display; the office was packed with all manner of community leaders, elected officials, friends, and family, who all came out to share in this special occasion.

Introducing Denise Edwards was Dr. Richard Campbell, who said, "You've heard of the term 'power behind the throne.' We've had a power behind the throne for quite awhile, and now she sits on the throne. We're fortunate to have a person of this ilk be in the position that she's in. I know a number of you are aware of the fact that other assessors and many in the community come to her for the length and depth of her knowledge. She has the appreciation of her fellow office workers and the appreciation of our community."

Afterward, Edwards started to share her experience of working in the assessor's office and how much it has changed throughout the years. "It seems like yesterday I started out in the summers working. Then we had typewriters and calculators. We got the first computer when I went to work at the assessor's office. Of course, then we didn't trust them, so for two years we still typed the rolls and added them with a calculator to make sure the computer wasn't messing us up."

After reminiscing about times past, she started talking about her experience being elected as assessor and all the things she and her office have worked on in order to better help the community that they serve.

"Of course, my greatest honor was being elected as assessor in 2019. I couldn't have done it without my staff. It's not me, it's us. They're my work family and I love all of them so much, and we work as a team and we try to do the best possible job for our citizens.

"We began by rolling out a public-awareness campaign to let our senior citizens know that they can freeze their assessments. We've done really well with it. We've increased our number of freezes by quite a lot and, during reassessment year, that really helps them because a lot of them are on fixed income, and they were unaware that there was such a program that could help them.

"We also changed our GIS mapping online to a free service where before it was subscription based. We updated our website to make it more user friendly and added a few things. During COVID we added online homestead sign-up, and we actually were able to get some federal funds to help us with that.

"We began doing an annual report starting two years ago, and we've just tried to keep our public informed of all our changes — how the process works, how millages are set — and let them know how everything goes, and we plan to continue that.



BY WILL PHILLIPS
Minden Press-Herald

WILL PHILLIPS/MINDEN PRESS-HERALD

On January 5, 2021 Denise Edwards was sworn into office as Webster Parish Assessor by Holli Vining, Webster Parish Clerk of Court.

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BY U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT



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NICK COX

elected Mayor of the City of Minden

BY WILL PHILLIPS

Minden Press-Herald

In the fall of last year, the citizens of Minden voted Nick Cox as the Mayor of the City of Minden for the next four years. He, along with four other City Councilmen and the police chief are new to their positions, which allows them a unique opportunity to provide fresh perspective on the operations of the city.

Mayor Cox was asked about what some of his expectations were for when he took the role as Mayor, and how those expectations were aligning with reality now that they've had some time to get comfortable in the position. One thing that Cox mentioned that took some adjusting as Mayor was being a CEO for the City and its employees. When one thinks of a Mayor and their responsibilities, what first comes to mind tends to be more of the governing aspects of the position, but in the day-to-day, a lot of decisions have to be made relating to the City's different departments and

"I was aware of, but didn't fully grasp the CEO of the City aspect of being Mayor. Minden has 215 employees. We don't have a Chief of Staff, so they all answer to me," said Cox.

He went on to say that this makes for a fast paced work environment where he's making decisions near non-stop and is confident about being up to the task.

"When I go to work in the morning, I never know what's coming. Anything can happen at any time," said Cox. "I like being busy. I may leave here at five, but I usually don't stop working for the City of Minden till I go to bed. It's a good fit for me."

Another thing that Mayor Cox didn't realize was how well respected Minden was by other municipalities and governments. Cox expressed that when interacting with other government officials in places like Baton Rouge, the respect afforded to him by others wasn't necessarily on account of who he was, but of what and who he represented, Minden and its citizens. He went on to say that it made him even more prideful that he was elected to take up the role of Mayor.

"Minden still has a very good reputation and is still very well respected. When I go somewhere, the weight of a really solid city with really solid citizens is behind me," said Cox.

"When you are the mayor, and realize who all you represent in the city, it's really something to take in, the magnitude of it. It's humbling in a weird way. I have



“
When I go to work in the morning, I never know what's coming. Anything can happen at any time...
”

Mayor Nick Cox

a powerful amount of pride behind that. I know it's nothing I did, it's the people I represent and everyone who came before us."

After taking office, one of the first issues that Mayor Cox noticed and addressed was that different departments and people had different versions of the City's Employee Handbook.

"I had one goal, to pass the handbook in February's meeting, because I didn't have anything to govern with. We had so many drafts of the handbook, that everybody had their own copy of their own. No one knew which version we were supposed to be going by. It was a mess. How do you govern with no rules in a city that's very strict? This ain't a woodworking shop with two employees, this is a city with 200+ employees," said Cox.

"I got the most current version of the draft, had copies made, and gave them to the council members and a couple to department heads to let them circulate it, and said, 'If anybody has an issue with this handbook you let me know right now, because we're putting it on the agenda in February and we're going to pass this thing.'"

The handbook was passed unanimously by the council in the February Council

meeting, with the main objective being to get everyone on the same page, and if there are issues with the handbook that arise later down the line, they can amend it as needed.

"We just passed it as it was, and if there's anything that comes up that we need to change, the council will amend it and change it. That doesn't mean they loved it 100%. I don't even love it 100%, but it gives us a working starting place. At least something we can fix if we need to," said Cox.

Another objective that the Mayor wants to tackle in the near future is to get the Councilmembers as well as community leaders from all over Minden to provide input and come up with a long term plan for the city.

"I've been talking with the council. Nothing is set in stone yet, but we're looking to get a new city plan. Something that will answer questions like what do we want to be? How do we want to grow? What do we want our city to look like in ten years? What kind of industries and businesses do we want to attract?"

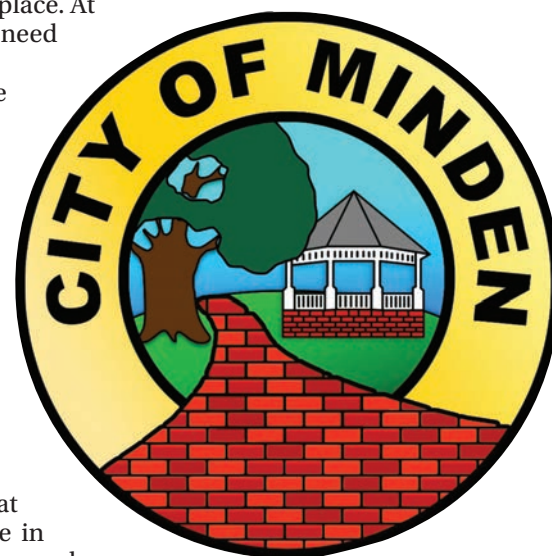
Making a city plan can sound simple on the surface, but what is being asked here is for people to take time and visualize what kind of city they would like to live in five or ten years down the line, and what steps can be taken to help realize that vision?

"What this is going to take is community input. That's the part I can't do by myself. I know what Nick Cox wants for this city, and I know what a few people want for this city, but to do this right we need to get leadership and voices from all corners of the city and ask what do we want collectively," said Cox.

"If you look at why Ruston is doing so well, I think it's because they had a good plan. I think the mayor over there is doing a good job of executing that plan, and it's paying off. If you time travel back ten years, it doesn't even look the same. That is the result of having a vision, making a plan, and executing it. That's what we have to do here in Minden," said Cox.

The Mayor seems to have an optimistic outlook for Minden's future, and he credits a big part of that optimism towards the current Minden City Council

"I think hands down we have a very visionary Council. They all want to see Minden flourish. We all want to leave it better than we got it, and you just can't get much better than that. From my chair, the future of Minden looks great. Everywhere I look there are opportunities for us. Of course we have our hurdles, but I think that together we can overcome them," said Cox.





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Minden celebrates Fire Chief Kip Mourad's 50 years of service



Friends, family, community leaders, elected officials, and all manner of people made their way out to Minden City Hall Thursday afternoon in order to see off Minden's Chief of the Fire Department, Kip Mourad, at his retirement party after the 50 years of service that he has given.

Representatives from Congressman Mike Johnson's office presented Mourad with a formal letter of thanks for his years of service, as well as the gift of a flag that had been flown over the United States Capitol.

"I'm honored. I really am. To even have had the job and be doing it for this long. I've loved every second of it. It's been the greatest thing I could do in my life, other than marrying my wife and raising my kids," said Mourad.

PHOTOS BY WILL PHILLIPS/MINDEN PRESS-HERALD





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Police officers receive the Life Saving Award



AMBER MCDOWN/MINDEN PRESS-HERALD

Congratulations and thank you to CPT Morris, CPT Morgan, LT Young, OFC Griffith, and OFC Cayer for your unparalleled service to the citizens of Minden.

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald

Five Minden police officers received the Life Saving Award this week for rescuing a critically injured young man. The officers had been dispatched to investigate a gunshot earlier this winter. When they ar-

rived, they found a youth had been shot in the neck. The young man was in dire threat of bleeding out, so the officers applied pressure to the injury and got him to the hospital in a squad car more quickly than an ambulance could have arrived. “They did a really good job that night,” said Chief of Police, Steve Cropper. The

Chief believes that the officers’ first aid efforts and their decision to transport the young man to the hospital certainly saved his life. “Five MPD officers worked together as a team and went above and beyond the call of duty to preserve the life of a juvenile who suffered a life threatening gunshot wound to the neck area. Their bravery and quick action, in

all likelihood, saved a life,” said Minden Police Association’s Facebook post. “They bring great credit upon themselves, the Minden Police Department, and the City of Minden.” Congratulations and thank you to CPT Morris, CPT Morgan, LT Young, OFC Griffith, and OFC Cayer for your unparalleled service to the citizens of Minden.

Deputies complete DARE training

BY AMBER MCDOWN
Minden Press-Herald



AMBER MCDOWN/MINDEN PRESS-HERALD

Ladarius Joseph, the SRO at Webster Junior High and Jeremy Wiggins, the student resource officer (SRO) at Doyline High complete training.

Two deputies of the Webster Parish Sheriff’s Office have recently completed DARE training which will allow them to talk to students about things like drugs, peer pressure, bullying, and cyber-bullying. Jeremy Wiggins, the student resource officer (SRO) at Doyline High, and Ladarius Joseph, the SRO at Webster Junior High, attended DARE officer training in Baton Rouge for two weeks in August and completed this rigorous course. “It’s very intense training,” said Sheriff Jason Parker. “From what I’ve been told, it’s one of the hardest schools to graduate from — very tough.” DARE, which stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education, was founded by Police Chief Daryl Gates and the Los Angeles School District in 1983 to combat the surge

of drug abuse in youth that arose in the 1970s and 1980s. The DARE program’s success has led to its use across the nation and globe. “I am very proud of our deputies for completing the DARE Officer training program.....it was a long and intense two weeks of training for them,” Parker said. “From my understanding, they were the 45th class to graduate in the state of Louisiana. With these two graduates we now have a total of three certified DARE officers that will be teaching our kids in Webster Parish from kindergarten to high school. Their vision is to promote wise decision making to our youth by teaching them how to be safe and responsible. I believe DARE is the most widely used and successful drug prevention program around.” Deputy Wiggins is the second member of his family

to complete this training. “His dad was a DARE officer for 30-something years down in Red River Parish,” Parker said. Wiggins is proud to be following in his father’s footsteps. Deputy Joseph showed his personal excellence by being conferred the Most Outstanding Team Member award during the training. “They really poured their hearts and souls into this, and it means something to them to be able to make a positive impact with these kids,” said Parker. These two officers are now even more highly trained and prepared for their work as SROs. The school board’s recent vote to add more SROs to schools in Webster Parish has now been fulfilled. The only school without its own officer, Jones Elementary, will have a trained SRO on staff as of Tuesday, September 6.



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MINDEN PRESS-HERALD — PROFILE 2023 — 49

SROs will give Webster Parish schools more security

At a special meeting of the Webster Parish School Board, board members voted to approve funding to supply every public school in our parish with a School Resource Officer (SRO).

In making a presentation at the special meeting, Sheriff Jason Parker began by outlining his experience with SROs: "I have a unique perspective because, when I retired from the Louisiana State Police and came to work for the sheriff's office, I started out as a school resource officer. I split my time between Doyline High School, Lakeside, and Central Elementary — which was tough at times. With almost 27 years of law enforcement experience at that time, that year-and-a-half or two years with those kids was the most rewarding of my career. I saw firsthand both the benefits and the importance of having an SRO in each of our schools. SROs are not only there to provide security. They are also there to build relationships and to have a positive influence on students. It is very important to me that they get to see professional law enforcement officers in a positive light. I saw how important it is to have SROs in our schools so, when I took office, I looked at our budget and was able to add two SROs fulltime to our office. And then we partnered with the school board and added three more. I think it's time for us to try to add some more. The importance of SROs at those schools — being there as the first line of defense for our kids and the staff at every school — is paramount. Mr. Rowland and Mr. Washington came to me and expressed that the school board was ready to add some more SROs to the schools. We've come up with a plan, and we're sitting on "Go." All we need is your permission to move forward."

The primary concern raised by both board members and audience members was that each school should have their own officer and not be required to share SROs between schools. Obviously, one person cannot be in two places at the same time. Additionally, there

is concern regarding officers' training and their ability to handle dangerous situations.

Sheriff Parker feels strongly about training and having the right personalities in place to work with kids on a daily basis. In response to these concerns, he replied, "All of my SROs have been through a POST Academy. They're certified POST [Peace Officer Standards & Training] officers. And each one of those — the ones we have now and the ones that we will hopefully pick up — will go through an extensive training program with active shooter situations.

I can say that our SROs probably have one of the most important job positions that we have, at least in my opinion. And, it's hard to just pick a number and say 'I'm going to have this many.' You have to have the right people in there. We're going to make sure that those are special folks that we're putting in our schools — not just filling a spot."

Currently, Sheriff Parker has people ready to start working at every school except one. Phillips Elementary and J.L. Jones Elementary, two schools that are very close together, will temporarily be sharing an SRO until the right person can be found to fill that position. For the schools that do not currently have a SRO, Parker is only waiting for the applicants' physicals to be approved. Once approved, the new SROs should be working on campuses by the first of next week at the latest.

Besides approving funding for more SROs, the board also approved funding to lease two marked law enforcement vehicles. Sheriff Parker wants an officer to accompany students on trips when

BY AMBER MCDOWN

Minden Press-Herald

they leave the parish for things like sporting events. He said that it provides extra security for the students, even if it's just instant help if a bus breaks down. In addition, he said, "Just the visibility of a marked car in front of a school can mean a lot."

Funding for the additional SROs and vehicles will be paid

up with a plan that we can sustain and be thankful for whatever we get because although there may be some monies up front that may come our way, will it continue to come our way yearly? We have no way of knowing." Rowland concluded by saying, "But I can't say enough about the citizens of Webster Parish and how the citizens have always stepped up for the needs of our kids in every way.

And this includes safety and security."

After the SRO portion of the meeting, Jeff Franklin, the supervisor of transportation and maintenance, and Ursula Hullaby, the supervisor of Safe and Drug-free Schools, gave presentations on the physical and mental security measures that are in place.

Mr. Franklin spoke about the physical safety measures. Each school has a crisis plan that is tailored to each particular school.

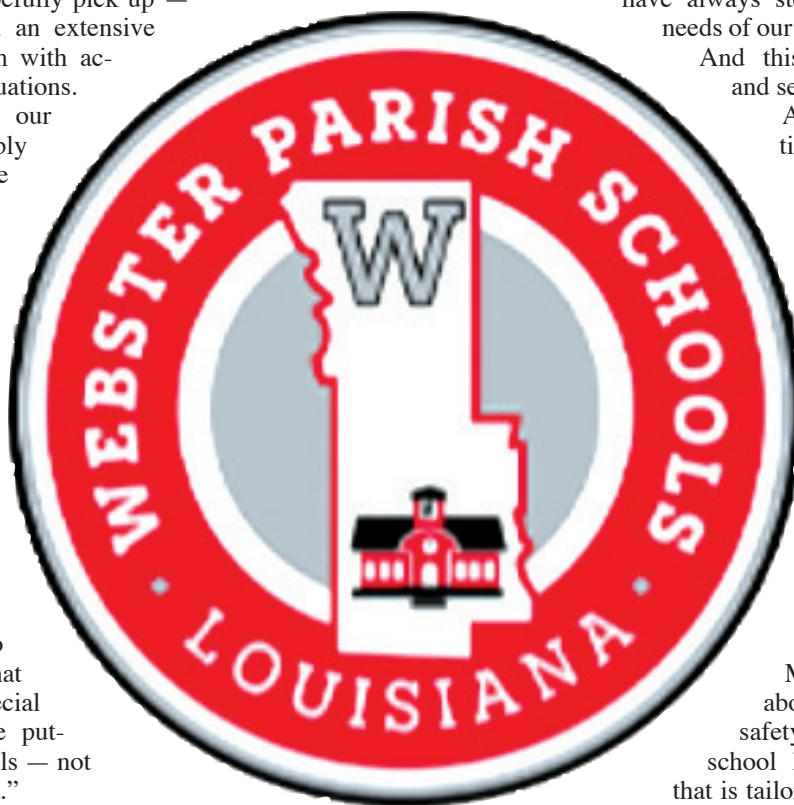
This past summer, principals at each school conducted an extensive threat assessment for their schools that will be used to place additional measures. There are standard response protocols in place for dealing with a variety of situations. They have been installing significant amounts of security fencing to help limit access to schools. Most schools are now using a single point of entry so people can be monitored entering the schools. They are in the process of installing electronic door locks that will require people to be "buzzed in" to enter. Franklin stated, "Research indicates that anything we can do to inconvenience the bad guy will save lives."

Franklin said that the district has been using a universal locking system for years and that emergency responders have access via secured lock boxes. He continued by saying, "Probably the most powerful thing we do district wide is locking classroom doors. Statistics tell us that no students have ever been killed behind a locked classroom door." A state law now requires that classrooms be locked during instructional time. "We were locking doors way before the law was passed," said Franklin. To add to that, they are in the process of installing peepholes in classroom doors so that teachers can see who is outside before unlocking the doors. And, class room windows are all covered or tinted to keep people outside from seeing in. As a side note, fire codes require that all buildings be easy to exit so that locked doors will not present issues in the case of an emergency evacuation.

All schools are also equipped with metal detectors and security cameras. All visitors must sign in at the office and then wear a visitor's badge while on campus. Drills for fires, lockdowns, and dangerous weather are conducted regularly during the school year. Security and crisis training is ongoing. Mr. Franklin and Ms. Hullaby attended the Louisiana School Safety Summit in Baton Rouge this past summer and brought back new information and training to share with the district.

The district is in the process of rolling out two new apps that should increase security. The Rave Panic Button app will be used by authorized personnel only. This app allows a person to simultaneously contact 911 dispatch, administrators, and staff at the touch of a button in order to alert them of an emergency situation. It includes texting capabilities to keep all the stakeholders informed as to what is happening. For students, they will be rolling out the CrimeStoppers Safe Schools app. This app can be used by students to report crimes, suspicious behavior, concerns about someone's mental health, etc. The information is considered anonymous unless it is

◀ CONTINUED ON PAGE 51



for out of the individual maintenance funds in the district. For example, the District 6 ½ cent fund for schools within Minden will be used to provide the needed funding. It will be an increase of approximately \$637,000 per year.

An audience member asked if there is any federal funding that could help cover the costs. Superintendent Rowland replied, "I did speak to the state superintendent last week about this very issue. I asked if we could expect federal funding to come our way to help local districts like ours with the costs of SROs? The state superintendent fully expects that there will be funding coming our way."

SROs

◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50

deemed a life-or-death situation. Crime Stoppers forwards the concerns or information to the school district. This app is intended for middle school and high school students, but elementary students might use it as well.

Ms. Hullaby finished the presentations by discussing the social/emotional and mental health measures that are in place. If a student is reported to be a possible threat to himself or others, counselors use the Columbia threat-assessment instrument to assess the potential threat. "If it's deemed that a student is at high risk, the parents are called. The students are never left by themselves and they are sent to a medical professional to be further assessed," Ms. Hullaby stated. At that point, the student cannot return to school until they have been cleared by a medical doctor or a licensed therapist.

There are a number of professionals available through the school system to aid parents and students. They provide school counselors, behavioral interventionists, social workers, educational diagnosticians, and service linking — to provide help finding services to treat substance abuse, anger management, social anxiety, depression, etc. These professionals are provided for the use of both students and staff. "All counseling is private and confiden-



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”
Sheriff Jason Parker

tial unless the student or staff member is in danger of harming himself or others,” said Ms. Hullaby.

The stresses of living in a pandemic have been emotionally traumatic for many students. As a result, school counselors have had some of their secondary job duties removed in order to give them more time to do their primary job: counseling students.

Kindergarten through 8th grade schools have also started having 15 minutes per day of “community circles” to learn to listen to one another, converse, and learn respect for one another. This falls under the heading of social/emotional learning. “We have a curriculum for K-8. It is an evidence-based program, and it teaches social skills and it helps students become self-directed competent learners,” said Hullaby. This can also help teachers identify students who have mental, as well as social/emotional needs that are not being met.

The administrators and staff of the Webster Parish school district are working diligently to maintain the physical and mental well-being of the students in our parish during difficult times. The school board meets on the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.



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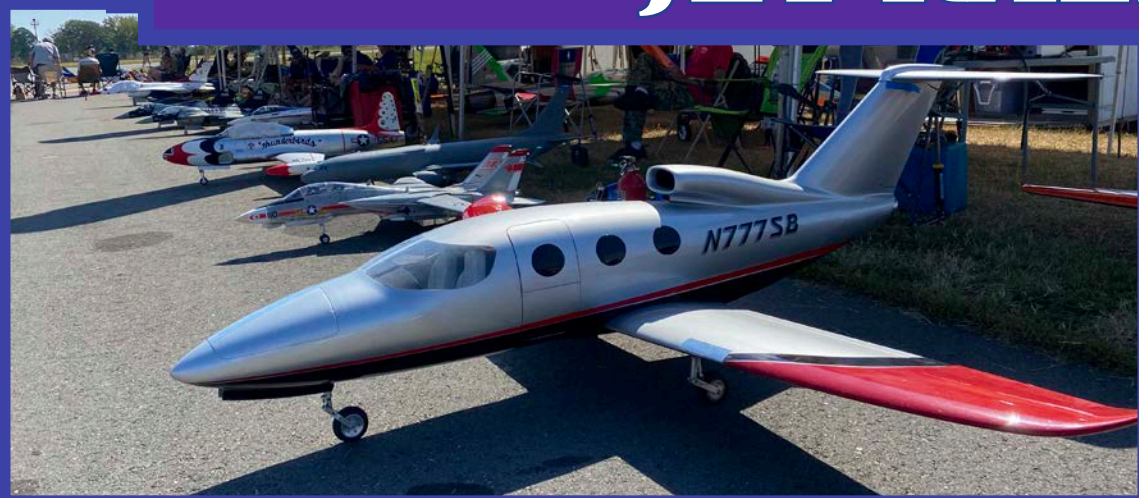
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New chief of police brings 27 years experience

Minden's new chief of police, Jared McIver, brings 27 years of law enforcement experience as well as decades of training to his new department. Chief McIver has big plans for making the Minden Police Department a leader in law enforcement quality and professionalism.

Chief McIver has been serving the citizens of Webster Parish since he was 20 years old.

"I started out in the Webster Parish Sheriff's Office in 1996. I was the dispatcher," said McIver. "I was there two weeks when Sheriff Riser said, 'You are the worst dispatcher I've ever had. I've got to get you out of there.' And I agreed. That's when he moved me into the correctional center. I was there for a few months, and then they moved me up to the fourth floor of the courthouse [to work as a jailer]. I did that for a couple months, then they sent me to the police academy. I came back, and they put me on patrol. In 2001, when I was 25, I was promoted to shift supervisor."

But McIver had another goal that he wasn't willing to let slip by.

"But my ultimate goal since I was a junior in high school was to become a game warden with Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries. And the reason was a man named Jim Brown — he lives in Doyline and he was with Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries. His wife, Mrs. Halda Brown, was a teacher at Doyline High School. Mr. Jim would come up there from time to time to eat lunch with her. I would go talk to him, and he would tell me stories about everything they were doing. And it just excited me. I loved hunting and fishing. I remember telling him, 'Mr. Jim, one day I'm either going to come work with you or take your place,' and he would encourage me.

"So when I was in the sheriff's office, it being my fifth year of being there and being promoted to shift supervisor, I knew that, if I ever was going to chase my goal of being a game warden, I had to do it then. So I applied and was hired. I started October 1, 2001, in the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Academy in Baton Rouge. While I was in the academy, Mr. Jim Brown retired, and I took his spot just like I told him I would.

"When I got out [of the academy], they started putting me through different types of schools and had me come back and start a lot of training. So for about 18 of my 20 years, I went to all kinds of schools everywhere; got certified in doing everything and teaching, and I taught in our training academy and all over the place."

About two years ago, McIver started thinking about making a change.

"I would come up here to the police department and drink coffee and visit with some of the patrol officers. I knew I was eligible to retire from Wildlife and Fisheries soon, and I just had a tugging at my heart saying, 'You ought to think about running for police chief.' I called Chief Cropper and I said, 'Chief, are you going to be running again in 2022?' and he said, 'Jared, I'm going to the house.' I told him I was thinking

about running for his position. He was very encouraging and happy that I wanted to take over the department.

"I was able to retire at 20 years from Wildlife and Fisheries, and ran for the position. The rest is history. I'm excited about it. I'm glad that I'm able to give the guys training and the things that I bring to the table — the experience and all the resources from meeting different officers all over the state of Louisiana," McIver said.

For most of his career, McIver has been heavily involved in training or instructing, so it is no surprise that he understands the importance of a highly-trained department.



"My last 20 years with the state was 50% training and 50% in the field. I've traveled throughout the United States and all over the state of Louisiana training state police and game wardens and police officers and sheriff's deputies in all aspects of law enforcement. So I understand that training is key to how we react to situations," said Chief McIver.

He has already had one officer attend field training officer's school, and that's just the beginning. There are officers attending courses to learn about less lethal bean bag rounds (bean bags shot from a shotgun), defensive tactics, sobriety testing, and more. He even has one doing the intensive drug recognition expert (DRE) training, which McIver himself has completed.

"In 2008 I became the first ever Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries agent to become a drug recognition expert or DRE," said McIver. "We can recognize people under the influence of drugs other than alcohol. Let's say an officer stops someone on the street and they're impaired — they do a field sobriety test and they're impaired. They bring in the Intoxilyzer and their blood alcohol level is zero. There's nothing

BY AMBER MCDOWN

Minden Press-Herald

ing there, but this person's impaired. So they call a DRE in, and the DRE

does a 45-50 minute evaluation. When they finish they can tell that officer, it's not alcohol that you're seeing them under the influence of, it's a drug category, like they're under the influence of stimulants with cannabis, or depressants and hallucinogens, or it could be even more. But we're able to go testify on the behalf of that officer. He can go ahead and charge them with DWI, testify in court that that person was under the influence of these drug categories — that the officer made a good stop, it was a good DWI, and it was because they were under the influence of this rather than alcohol. It's an extensive class to go through, and there's only a few thousand of us in the entire world. I was able to become an instructor in that so over

the years I became a drug recognition expert instructor. Joel Kendrick is being sent to that class in March. He's going to be our first ever Minden Police Department drug recognition expert. He's going to come back and bring

that information back to our department, and hopefully we'll start getting more officers trained in that. It's one of toughest schools to graduate from.

"When I send these guys to schools, they're becoming instructors. Then they're coming back and teaching the entire agency what they have been taught and are certifying our guys. I've got two guys going to a firearm instructor's school to become instructors in that. We've got somebody going to first aid / CPR to be certified to teach that. We have two of our guys going to a defensive tactics class that the Webster sheriff's office is putting on. They'll come back and teach us.

"Our goal is to, at the end of the year, have our first ever annual in-service where every year, starting in the fall of this year, we'll recertify on everything: firearms, defensive tactics, field sobriety testing, Intoxilyzer, first aid, CPR. And then we'll start implementing things — situation scenarios and different things. But we'll designate a month every year for nothing but training and retraining and brushing up on our skills. We're happy to be able to do that for the first time, to have our own annual in-service starting," Chief McIver said.

Since taking office, McIver has added seven more patrol units to the department.

"When I first took office, we barely had enough patrol units to cover a shift. I was

able to go out and talk with other area agencies, and we were able to purchase, at a very discounted rate, some other patrol units. Used ones, but they're in very good condition so we've got those out there now so that anytime that we have parades and different things we've got enough units to help cover things," McIver said.

He's also added a juvenile detective and two new hires to the department, as well as having two officers, Reece Tewell and Christopher Cayer, promoted to sergeant.

"We have positions open right now for patrol and dispatch," said McIver. "We're taking in as many applications as we can to start filling up our department to get all those slots filled."

A new procedure which he has implemented is area patrols. Area patrols keep officers spread throughout the city.

"We have numbered districts where we patrol areas. Officers are assigned by their supervisor on each shift to an area; we've got three areas that the city's broken down into. The officers stay in their area unless they go to back up somebody else," said McIver.

This system is already paying off with arrests being made because an officer was in the area.

Chief McIver is well aware of the importance of working together with other agencies and departments.

"Every week we meet up with the Webster Sheriff's Office," McIver said. "We realize that things that happen out in the parish come into the city and vice versa, so we joined our forces together, we work together.

"I've got a great working relationship with the mayor and the city council. I'm proud of our city council and I'm proud of our mayor because they work together. They're super helpful and resourceful as well. They have great minds. The things they bring to the table...I'm like wow, that's good. It's great having all our heads working together — the mayor, the city council, the police department, the sheriff's office — nothing but positive can come out of that.

"I know, in the past, that we haven't had that, so now that we do, it's good. The people of Minden want it, and I believe that's a big part in how they voted, and it shows. We all recognize that, and we do our best to do our work. We may disagree on things, but we just disagree and move on.

"I want the citizens of Minden to be proud of the Minden Police Department. If people ask, 'How's the police department in Minden?' I want the citizens of Minden to say, 'We're proud of them. They're highly trained, well qualified, and courteous.'

"We want to make sure that we're a servant to the people of Minden and that we're there to protect them. My vision for the Minden Police Department is for it to be one of the most professional departments around — to have other departments coming to us to find out how we're doing what we're doing. That's my goal and where I see us in the future."

“
I started out in
the Webster Parish
Sheriff's Office in 1996.
I was the dispatcher.

”
Chief Jared McIver



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