

Progress on Intracoastal Bridge, 415 projects

The construction of the new south bound Intracoastal Bridge structure is now underway, and should be completed by the Spring of 2023.

Those driving on the Intracoastal Bridge have already noticed the pile driving equipment adjacent to the existing southbound bridge. The test pilings have been driven, while equipment is being mobilized for the project. The construction contract begins in April and the contractor, Kiewit Corp., has 300 days to complete the project.

This project will have minor to moderate traffic impacts at various times and locations,, but once the south bound bridge is completed, traffic on La. Hwy. 1 will be re-routed to the new bridge while the existing Intracoastal bridge is demolished and a new northbound bridge is constructed.

La. Hwy. 415 Connector Project

Meanwhile, the environmental update is underway for the La. Hwy. 415 Connector route, which will extend from Hwy. 415 at Interstate 10 to La. Hwy. 1. The update is expected to be complete in September, and was required by federal law to proceed.



Construction equipment is mobilized and test pilings are drilled at the site of the new south bound Intracoastal Bridge.

The Louisiana Legislature voted to allow alternative delivery packages to expedite the project during its session last Spring, and the La. Department of Transportation and Development is beginning the process of procuring a construction manager to develop alternative delivery packages for the project.

The final alignment of the connector road is being determined during the update. The alignment had to be changed slightly due to ongoing plans in and around the Port of Greater Baton Rouge. At this time, it is estimated that work on the connector project will begin by early 2024.

Improvements coming to water system

West Baton Rouge Parish has ordered the equipment to install smart water meters for its 9,000 plus customers, and is studying upgrades to water lines in the northern part of the parish to improve the pressure and quality of water.

Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot said the parish received \$5.1 million from the American Rescue Act, and will be using those funds for the water system improvements. The parish had already started the conversion to smart water meters with a pilot project in Fairview Subdivision. That project was successful in increasing efficiency by allowing remote meter reading, eliminating manual reading errors, detecting leaks quickly,

and providing better control of water system pressure and operation. The parish Utility Department will begin retrofitting the existing meters throughout the parish with the smart meter equipment this summer, and the change-out will extend into 2023.

Meanwhile, a study is underway by Owen & White Engineers to determine the problems with water delivery in the northern part of the parish and to develop preliminary costs for improvements. "We'll look at the projects they propose and determine the best way to spend the available funds," Berthelot said. "We are hoping to get some projects going by the end of the year."

**WESTBANK
MARDI GRAS
PARADE
SCHEDULE**

Addis Firemen's Parade
Saturday, Feb. 19 - 1 pm

**Krewe of Good Friends
Parade - Port Allen**
Sunday, Feb. 27 - 1 pm

**Krewe of Comogo
Parade - Plaquemine**
Sunday, Feb. 27 - 7 pm

Mardi Gras Day -
Tuesday, March 1

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WBR PARISH COUNCIL - Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday of month, 5:30 p.m., Parish Council Building, 225-383-4755, www.wbrcouncil.org

WBR PARISH SCHOOL BOARD - Committee meetings - 2nd Tuesday of month, 5 p.m. School Board meetings - 3rd Wednesday of month, 5 p.m., School Board office 225-343-8309, www.wbrschools.net

WBR PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION - Meets 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of month, 5:30 p.m., Council meeting room, Parish Council Building.

WBR BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS - Meets 1st Tuesday of month. 5 p.m., Council meeting room in Parish Council Building.

TOWN OF ADDIS - Meets 1st Wednesday of month, 6 p.m., Addis Town Hall. Phone: 225-687-4844, www.addisla.org

CITY OF PORT ALLEN - Committee meetings - 1st Wednesday of month, 5:30 p.m. Council meetings - 2nd Wednesday of month, 5:30 p.m. Port Allen City Hall 225-346-5670, www.portallen.org

TOWN OF BRUSLY - Committee meetings on 1st Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Town Council meetings on 2nd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., Brusly Town Hall - 225-749-2909, www.bruslyla.com

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Trahan Gallery, war exhibit, variety of classes open at Museum

February 18 – 6–8 pm - Trahan Gallery Opening & Historical Happy Hour – The Trahan Gallery: Rooting Metal is a new exhibit dedicated to the Trahan Family of Port Allen and highlighting the sculptural art of Ronald Trahan. The opening celebration will feature live music by Last Ripp Brass Band, a gallery tour with museum curators and guest curator, Bennett Rhodes, and world-renowned Port Allen artist, Ronald Trahan. Free.

February 21 – 1-3PM - How to Mix Acrylics for Pouring: An Introduction - explore a new way of creating art with abstract artist and instructor, Kellie Rountree. This adult class will introduce the technique of using cups of paints to pour out amazingly beautiful abstract designs. Advanced registration is required by calling 336-2422 Ext. 200. Free

March 7 – April 11- (Mondays, 1-3PM) – Poured Acrylic Painting Workshop Series -- Sign up for a six week series taught by abstract artist, Kellie Rountree. Participants will leave with several completed works of art. Advanced, paid registration of \$75, which includes materials, is required by calling (225)336-2422 Ext. 200.

March 11 – Noon – Lunchtime Lecture – I Need a Higgins Boat. Do You Think You Can Find One? presented by by National WWII Museum Higgins Boat enthusiast Jimmy Duckworth - a discussion on building a replica of the vessel credited with winning World War II. Free.

March 13 – 2PM – City Nature Challenge Training – Join tens of thousands of people all around the world to find and document wildlife in their respective cities as part of an annual four-day global bio-blitz run. To register, call 225-336-2422 Ext. 200. Free.

March 16 – Noon – Lunchtime Lecture – School Boy in West Baton Rouge during WWII – Join West Baton Rouge Historical Association Board Member Ellis Gauthier for a discussion of life in WBR during the war years and a riveting tale of a real hometown hero from World War II. Free.

March 18 – 6–8PM - Historical Happy Hour with Chris Thomas King: Spend an evening with Louisiana's own actor, songwriter, and musical Blues legend! Free.

March 19 – June 5 – Take a close look at the process of converting sugar to sanitizer. This process began at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as hand sanitizer became crucial.

April 2 – May 29th– Aliento a Tequila (or The Spirit of Tequila) exhibition explores and celebrates the landscape, culture, and traditions that gave birth to tequila.

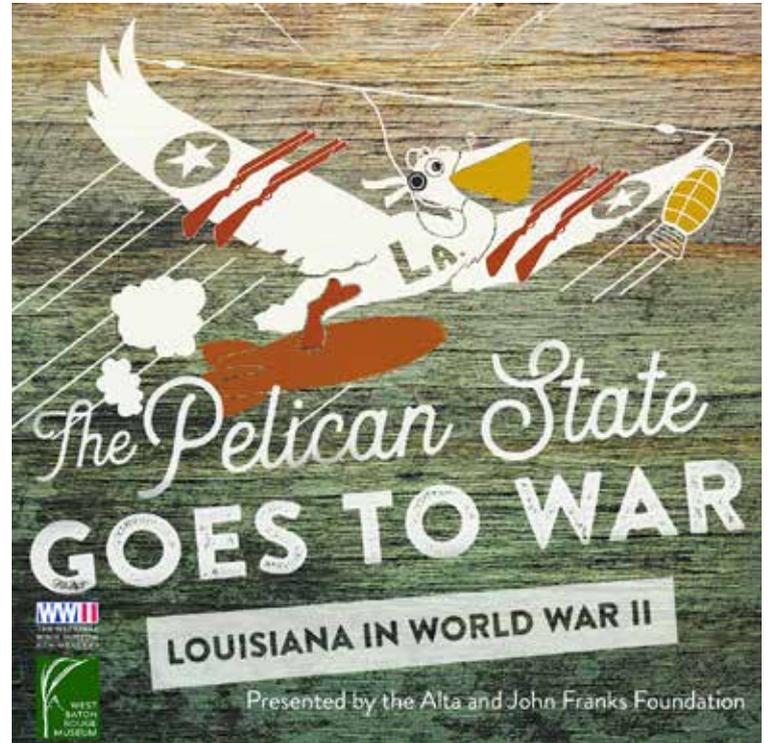
April 10 – Easter Eggstravaganza & Old Time Jam - An old-fashioned Easter Egg Hunt, games, crafts, a visit from the Easter Bunny and more on the museum grounds from 2–4 pm; followed by the museum's monthly Old Time Jam from 3-5 pm, featuring acoustic music open to anyone wishing to bring an instrument to play or enjoy listening to folk music Free

April 23 – Barn Demonstration Day and Evening Barn Dance – An all-day celebration of the art of the trades featuring discussions, demonstrations, fun farm activities for families, and an old fashioned evening barn dance. Free

Yoga class - last Tuesday of each month, 6 pm, free

Le Café Français - first Friday of each month, 1 pm, free

Old Time Jam - second Sunday of each month, 3-5 pm, free



Life in the 40s in WBR Pelican State goes to war

The WBR Museum is pleased to present a new exhibition titled Life in the 1940s in West Baton Rouge. The exhibit, which is on display through March 13, features photos and artifacts from the West Baton Rouge Historical Association's collection.

The Museum is also hosting a travelling exhibition from the National WWII Museum entitled The Pelican State Goes to War: Louisiana in WWII. Many citizens of Louisiana contributed to victory in World War II, with nearly 280,000 individuals from the state serving in the armed forces during the war.

The Pelican State Goes to War will share the courageous stories of Louisiana's six Medal of Honor recipients, which represent sacrifice and devotion. The exhibit, which is on view through March 20, will also explore tales of the Louisiana home front, from the great mobilization efforts of Higgins Industries, to first grader Billy Michal's scrap collection for school.

Activities at your Library

Weekly Grab and Go Craft Bags - We continue to offer weekly Grab and Go Craft Bags for a variety of ages and interests while supplies last.

Weekly Storytimes - All ages storytime resumes in February on Tuesday mornings at 10 am. Call (225) 342-7920 Ext. 231 for info. or register online.

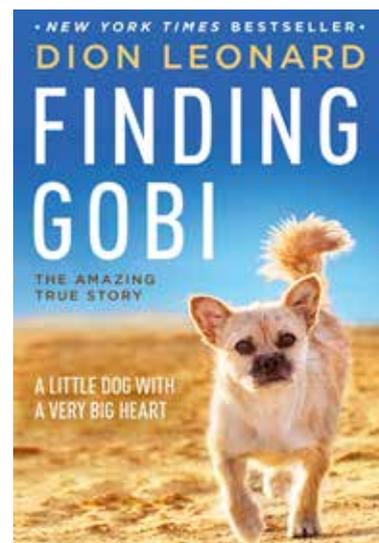
Lego Club - Builders ages 3 and up are welcome from 11 am -12:30 pm on February 19, March 19, and April 23 for a variety of building challenges.

Save the date - Easter Eggstravaganza! - The annual Easter Program sponsored by the WBR Library and WBR Museum will be on Sunday, April 10. Check our website and Facebook page for updates.



Open Monday–Friday 8:30 am–5:30 pm
Saturday 9 am - 1 pm

Author and dog of amazing true story to visit WBR



New York Times best-selling author, Dion Leonard and his dog, Gobi, are visiting the WBR Library on Thursday, February 24 at 6:30 pm. Finding Gobi is the miraculous tale of Dion Leonard, a seasoned ultramarathon runner who crosses paths with a stray dog while competing in a 155-mile race through the Gobi Desert in China. before he could take her home, Gobi went missing in the sprawling Chinese city where she was being kept. Dion, with the help of strangers and a viral outpouring of assistance on the internet, set out to track her down, and reunite with the dog that changed his life.

Parish pushes Entergy to address lights out along La. 1 corridor

Parish officials met with Entergy representatives in mid-January to discuss their concerns about highway lights out along the La. 1 corridor throughout the parish.

Entergy representatives said the company has a backlog of repairs due to crews necessary for repairs in hurricane-ravaged areas and retirements.

However, the parish voiced its concerns about the lighting outages, and provided Entergy with a list to addresses. West Baton Rouge Parish pays Entergy monthly for the street lighting, no matter if the lights are working or not.

If you have a street light out or lighting issue near your home or business, report it directly to Entergy at : www.entergy-louisiana.com/your_home/, or by fax to 1-800-995-8030.

You will need to provide the following information: your name, phone number, email address, street address, name of subdivision, the issue with the street light, whether it is in a city/town limits, and the utility pole number if it is on the pole.

Quad Area Agency offering free home weatherization services

The Quad Area Community Action Agency, which serves West Baton Rouge and surrounding parishes, is offering up to \$6,500 in weatherization services for residents who meet income eligibility requirements.

The program reduces residents' utility bills by adding insulation in the walls and attic, reducing air infiltration by sealing windows and doors, sealing duct work, and tuning up heating and air conditioning systems. The agency handles all aspects of the work, including materials and personnel performing the work.

For more information on the program, call Quad Area at 225-209-0780 or go to <http://quadarea.org/quadweatherization.html>.

Safety precautions for freezes

HEATING SAFETY:

- Keep flammable materials at least 3 feet away from furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves and space heaters.
- Never leave space heaters unattended or run them while you are sleeping.
- Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors once per month.
- NEVER run generators indoors.
- NEVER use a gas oven to heat your home.

Wood-burning stoves, fireplaces and heaters:

- Always keep a screen around an open flame.
- NEVER use gasoline or charcoal to start your fireplace.
- Do not close the damper when ashes are hot.

PROTECTING YOUR PIPES IN FREEZES:

- Wrap exposed outdoor pipes with cloth or foam insulators.
- Open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors so warmer air inside the house can circulate around the plumbing.
- Run only the faucet farthest from the property's main stop valve. Most homes' stop valves are near the front of the property.
- The stream should be no more than 1/16 of an inch.
- Turn off water as soon as outside temperatures reach above 32 degrees Fahrenheit.



Approval of project to enlarge Bayou Stumpy getting close

All of the studies necessary for the \$1 million project to clean out, widen and deepen Bayou Stumpy, which drains a large portion of the northern part of the parish, are nearing completion. The parish hopes to have final approval from the state to bid out the project by the end of this year.

The environmental study is almost complete, but the parish still must get a permit from the US Corps of Engineers and implement a wetlands credits plan to get the final FEMA and state approval to proceed. It has been a long process, but parish officials think the widening and deepening of the bayou will significantly improve drainage in the northern end of the parish.

General areas in which drainage will be improved include Rougon Road, Section Road between Rougon and Bayou Poydras, the Elm Grove / Pecan Grove area, U.S. 190 area, and Rosedale Road. The parish has received a hazard mitigation grant for 75 percent of the project cost.

Tax return help offered for low income, seniors

The WBR Council will again provide FREE tax return preparation by certified volunteers Jason Manola and Phillip Bourgoyne. To be eligible, residents must be low to moderate income, disabled, or a senior adult with an income of less than \$50,000.

Anyone interested in this program should go to the WBR Council Administrative Office in the WBR Annex Building at 880 N. Alexander Avenue in Port Allen to get an application.

Bring the following documents: the current year's tax package and/or label, all forms W-2 and 1099's, other income information, all deductions/credits, a copy of last year's return, Social Security number or taxpayer identification for you, your spouse and dependents and proof of identification.



Get local emergency alerts

Register your mobile phone number to get WBR emergency alerts.

Go to: wbrlepc.net and click on the cell phone registration link, or call 225-346-1577

RECREATION UPDATE



Registration for Westside Baseball and Softball is open until February 14

T-Ball	Baseball	Softball
Co-Ed Ages 3-4	Coaches Pitch 6U	Coaches Pitch 8U
Boys Age 5	Coaches Pitch 8U	Fast Pitch 10U
Girls Age 5-6	Kids Pitch 10U	Fast Pitch 12U
	Kids Pitch 12U	Fast Pitch 14U
	Kids Pitch 15U	

Sign up: westsidebaseballandsoftball.com

If you are unable to sign up via the website, email:

westsidebaseballandsoftball@gmail.com

Walk up registration available Feb. 8 at VFW Hall in Addis from 5:30 until 7:30 pm

Protect yourself from car burglaries

The West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office is continuing to get calls from residents about car burglaries. This crime has become common in the region. Residents can protect themselves from car burglaries by taking these precautions:



- Lock your vehicle doors
- Remove your keys from the vehicle
- Don't leave valuables in your car
- Do not leave a spare key near the vehicle
- Close the vehicle windows
- Park in well-lit areas
- Install an audible alarm system and anti-theft device



Christmas for 142 kids

WBR Sheriff Mike Cazes' Christmas Crusade collected enough donations to provide gifts for 142 children in 55 families in December. The photo above is from collection day in early December at Wal-Mart, in which donations and toys were collected. The department also held No Shave November among its staff, a fundraiser that raised \$800 toward the Christmas Crusade.



West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office NOW HIRING

**Openings for Entry Level Corrections Officers
Age 18 + over
Training to be provided by WBR Sheriff's Office**

Excellent benefits, including paid health insurance, paid vacation, retirement. Apply in person Monday-Friday 8:30 am-4:30 pm at Law Enforcement Center, 1150 N. West Dr., Port Allen.



TOWN OF ADDIS

Addis Police Dept. announces promotions, additions to force



Assistant Police Chief
Jason Langlois

The Addis Police Department has announced the promotions of two officers. In addition, the Addis Council approved the hiring of four additional officers in December to beef up the force. The department presently has 13 full-time officers, one part-time officer and five reserve officers.

Police Chief Ricky Anderson said he plans to add a narcotics officer, another detective, and two additional patrol officers so that the department has three officers on night patrol, and two officers on day patrol. "With the population growth that Addis has seen and the continued drug activity everywhere, we needed to increase our staff to keep up," Chief Anderson said.

Jason Langlois was promoted from Captain to Assistant Chief. Langlois initially got an associate degree in process technology, but quickly gravitated to law enforcement. He started with the Plaquemine Police Department in 2002, and transferred to the Addis Police Department in 2003. He has moved up in the ranks from being a patrol officer to lieutenant to captain, and now assistant chief. "I enjoy serving the community and protecting people in need," he said.

Ray LeJeune was promoted from a patrol officer to a detective. He has been with the department for almost 8 years. "I was on the volunteer fire department at 18 years old, so I've always wanted to help people and make a difference," he said. "When I decided I was going to become an officer, I worked hard to get the education to fulfill that dream." LeJeune said he enjoys investigative work and piecing together crimes, and is called to most crime scenes.



Detective Ray LeJeune

The Music is Back!

SAVE THE DATES!

April 29

May 13

May 27



Sponsored by Town of Addis



TOWN MEETINGS:

- Town Council - 1st Wednesday of month, Town Hall, 6 pm
- Planning & Zoning - 3rd Tuesday of month, Town Hall, 6 pm
- Historical Society - 2nd Tuesday of month, Addis Museum - 5:30 pm

By-pass pumps being added to lift stations

The Town of Brusly has nine lift stations that push raw sewerage through its system to the sewer treatment plant. By-pass equipment is being added to all of the stations as another way to prevent back-ups or spills should a lift station go out.

The by-pass equipment costs \$5,000 to \$8,000 per lift station. The equipment was added to four stations in 2021, and will be added to another three stations this year. The by-pass will be added to the final two stations in 2023. The town has received a LGAP grant from the state for the installation of the final five stations.

“Our lift stations have several redundancies to keep them operating, and this is another one to prevent any safety issues,” said Shane Sarradet, Public Works Director.



La. 1 issues being addressed by town

The Town of Brusly has taken steps to address issues regarding La. Hwy. 1 with state La. Department of Transportation and Development. Timing issues with the red lights through town have been addressed so that traffic flows smoothly.

The town has also expressed its concerns regarding the delays on the La. 1 overlay project. No time line for completion has been provided by the state.

St. James Park construction underway

Construction on the new St. James Park at the levee and East Main Street is underway by Kelly Construction. The park ties in to the Mississippi River levee walking and biking trail entrance at Brusly. It includes a pavilion with a covered stage area, restrooms, and water fountains. In addition, it has a small pavilion surrounded by trees, green space, water features, landscaping, lighting, and area for food trucks to park for events, and space for the town’s bike share program.

Get all the latest Town of Brusly news and updates!

Like us on facebook! [Facebook.com/BruslyTownHall](https://www.facebook.com/BruslyTownHall)



New residential developments will bring hundreds of new homes to PA

Infrastructure work has begun on two residential developments in Port Allen, and the construction of the first homes in both developments is expected by this summer or fall, said Mayor Richard Lee.

A 24-lot development of homes is underway on North 10th Street between Louisiana Avenue and Georgia Street.

In addition, the infrastructure work is well underway on the Westview Crossing 200 acre development on Court Street. Presently the water, gas and sewer lines are being run, and road construction will begin soon.

The first phase of the development will include 76 lots, but the subdivision is expected to have several hundred home sites over the coming years.

“We are happy to see the residential growth of our community and the economic development it will bring,” said Mayor Lee.



New residential development on Court St.



New residential development on North 10th St.

Events on for 2022, Conference Center bookings up

Things are looking up for the West Baton Rouge Tourist Info and Conference Center. All events are on for 2022 and bookings for the conference center are increasing daily, said Executive Director Kathy Gautreau.

Kite Fest Louisiana is the first event coming, with Education Day set for Friday, April 29, in which schools are invited to attend. Teachers can contact the WBR Conference & Visitors Bureau for more information at 225-344-2920. The event opens to the public on Saturday, April 30 and Sunday, May 1. See flyer at right.

Oldies By Goodies Fest is set for September 10-11, and a Christmas event will be held. Details on that will be released later.

"It's great to see that people are feeling more comfortable in gatherings, which has definitely helped out conference center bookings," Gautreau said.



Landscaping upgrades coming

The WBR Tourist Information and Conference Center is sporting new signage at the corner of Commercial Drive and Office Park Drive, and in front of the center (shown in the photo above). The signs are part of new exterior upgrades that will also include installing new landscaping and adding benches, to begin in the Spring.



Anna Johnson tapped as new Chamber Director

The West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce has announced that Anna Johnson has been named its new Executive Director. As a public affairs specialist with over 10 years of experience in both public and private sectors, Anna has experience in public relations consultation, team building, professional development, strategic implementation, and company collaboration.

"On behalf of myself and the entire board, we are pleased to welcome Anna Johnson to the Chamber family as the new Executive Director," said Patrick Hobbins, Chairman of the Chamber Board of Directors. "Her vast experience in



Chamber Executive Director
Anna Johnson

marketing and business development, along with her energy and commitment to community, will be a shining light for the WBR Chamber for years to come. Please join us in welcoming Anna."

Anna has been instrumental in promoting and attaining excellent working relationships in both professional and community organizations. She has served various community organizations for many years, exhibiting leadership and dedication to every endeavor she has been a part of.

After receiving her bachelor's degree in Mass Communication from Southeastern Louisiana, Anna worked in various roles for radio, newspaper and marketing before receiving her Master's

Degree in Organizational Communication from Louisiana State University.

Anna is a 2020 Boys & Girls Club Great Futures Gala Honoree, and a 2019 WCW Award winner. She was also recognized as the November 2019 Ambassador of the Month for Baton Rouge Area Chamber. Currently, Anna sits as the Chair for American Heart Association Advocacy Board, where she is responsible for outlining policies of the group for the fiscal year. Anna also dedicates time to improve our local education system by serving on the Leadership Committee for Club Blue of Boys & Girls Club of Baton Rouge, and as an Associate Board Member for City Year Baton Rouge. Anna has also previously served in various leadership roles and committees with Susan G. Komen, and been an Ambassador for Baton Rouge Area Chamber.

"I am excited to be a part of this wonderful Chamber," Johnson said. "My vision for this year is to connect local businesses, work with the young professionals in the community, and curate opportunities for mentorship amongst our business leaders. My goal for West Baton Rouge is to cultivate the relationships that are necessary to push towards progress."



Are you eligible for these property tax exemptions?

Louisiana residents have several special assessments and property tax exemptions for property owners who qualify, said West Baton Rouge Parish Assessor Chris Guerin. The special assessments and exemptions are listed below.

SPECIAL ASSESSMENT FOR BEING AGE 65 or OLDER OR DISABLED:

The Louisiana Special Assessment Level program allows for residents who are either:

- 65 years of age or older, or
- a veteran with a service connected disability rating of 50% or more by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, or
- a person permanently totally disabled as determined by a court or a state or federal agency, or a member of the armed forces of the U.S. or Louisiana National Guard who was KIA, MIA or a POW to have the assessed value of their residence frozen for property tax purposes. This means their homes would not be subject to revaluation every four years and the assessed value of their homes would remain the same no matter if property values increase.

To be eligible for any of the Special Assessments property owners must:

- own and occupy a residence qualifying for the homestead exemption, and
- have a combined adjusted gross income of \$100,000 or less in 2021 or later, and present proof of income and personal identification

EXEMPTION FOR VETERANS DISABLED IN SERVICE:

Veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 100% unemployability or totally disabled by the United States Department of Veteran Affairs are eligible for an increased homestead exemption, constitutionally approved by West Baton Rouge Parish voters in 2011. Veterans who qualify are eligible for a homestead exemption up to \$150,000 on their owner occupied primary residence. The surviving spouse of a qualifying deceased veteran shall be eligible

for the exemption if the surviving spouse occupies and remains the owner of the property, whether or not the exemption was in effect on the property prior to the death of the veteran.

EXEMPTION FOR UNMARRIED SURVIVING SPOUSES OF MILITARY, LAW ENFORCEMENT & FIRE PROTECTION OFFICERS:

Act 678, approved by state voters, became effective December 1, 2016. Act 678 establishes an exemption from property tax for the total assessed value of the primary residence for the unmarried surviving spouse of a person who died while on active duty as a member of the 21 armed forces of the U.S. or the Louisiana National Guard, or while performing their duties as a state police officer, local law enforcement officer or fire protection officer.

EXEMPTION FOR UNMARRIED SURVIVING SPOUSE OF FIRST RESPONDERS:

Act 427, approved by state voters, became effective January 1, 2018. Act 427 establishes an exemption from property tax for the total assessed value of the primary residence of an unmarried surviving spouse of a person who died while performing their duties as an emergency medical responder, technician, paramedic or volunteer fire fighter.

Assessor Guerin urges any property owners who qualify to come in and complete their applications for these programs at the Assessor's Office in the West Baton Rouge Parish Courthouse in Port Allen. Need more info? Call the Assessor's Office at 225.244.6777.



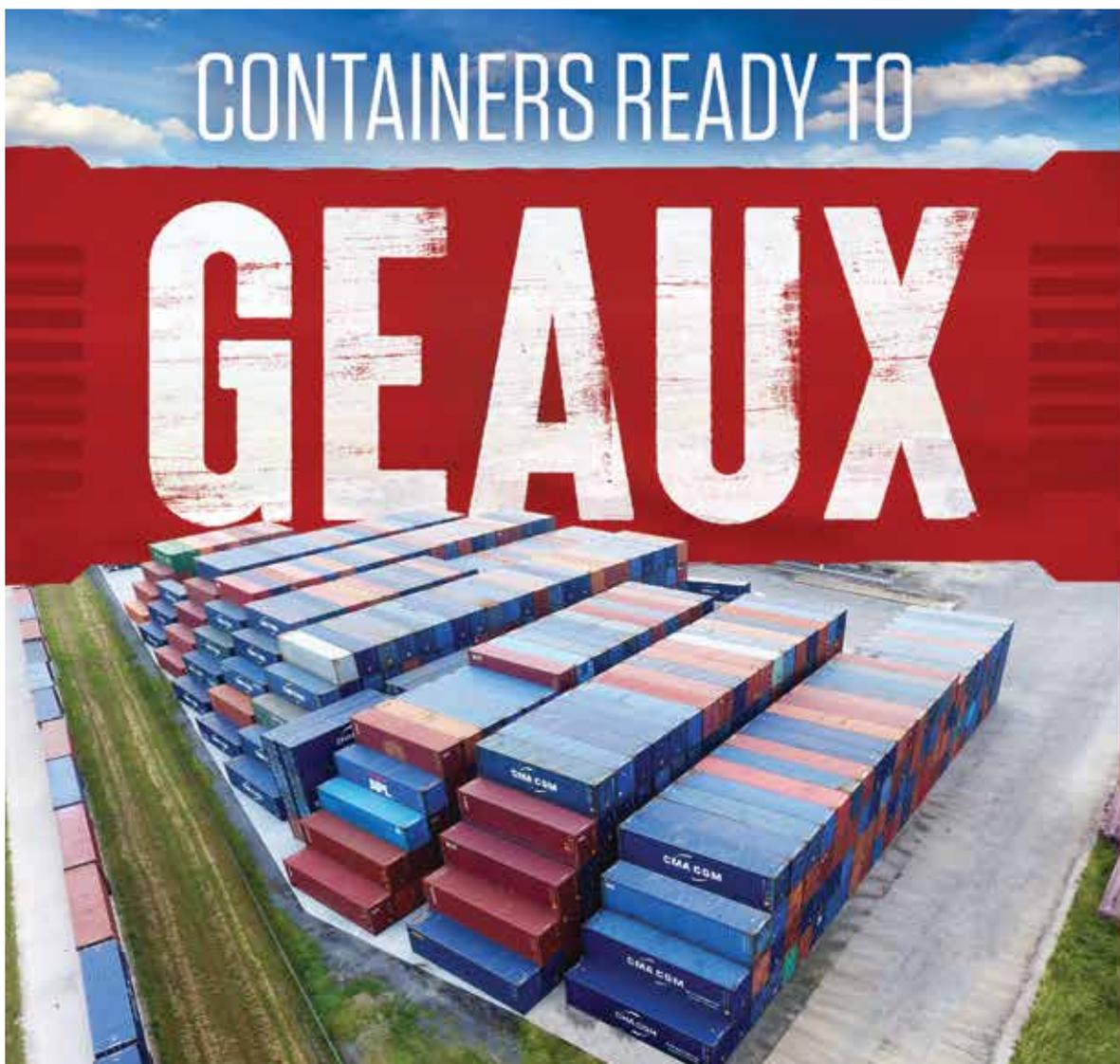
WEST BATON ROUGE PARISH ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

West Baton Rouge Courthouse, 850 8th St., Port Allen

225.344-6777

www.wbrassessor.org

PORT OF GREATER BATON ROUGE



PORT OF GREATER
BATON ROUGE

- Storage capacity has nearly doubled to accommodate up to 2,000 containers.

The successful public/private partnership between the Port of Greater Baton Rouge and SEACOR AMH has produced steady increases in the number of containers handled at the Port's barge terminal. As a result, a project to create nearly 4 acres of additional paved container storage capacity has been successfully completed. The yard is now capable of handling approximately 2,000 containers including containers measuring 40 feet, versus 20 feet.

Meet the Big Red Beast.

A 20% efficiency gain in container operations at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge is just one positive outcome of the Port's new, deep-reach container stacker known as *The Big Red Beast*. With a telescopic boom for stacking four containers high, shorter loading and unloading times have helped meet the increasing demand for container shipping services between Baton Rouge and New Orleans for area customers. The addition of the custom-made stacker is another component of the Port's recent expansion of its successful container operations.



For more information, contact Greg Johnson at (225) 342-1660.

- 2425 Ernest Wilson Drive ■ P.O. Box 380 ■ Port Allen, LA 70767-0380
PH: (225) 342.1660 ■ FAX: (225) 342.1666 ■ www.portgbr.com

WBR graduation rate up again, simulated score dips less than a point

WBR graduation rates continued to rise in the 2020-21 school year, reaching the highest rate in history at 88.8% for the district. "Our students also continue to graduate with industry based credentials and college course credits as reflected in the simulated Strength of Diploma score of 103.6 (A), up 5.4 points from 2019, 98.2," said Superintendent Wes Watts.

WBR GRADUATION RATE						
YEAR	2014	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
WBR	73.7	77.7	74.3	82.6	87.1	88.8
BHS	81.5	84.2	79.1	86.3	88.8	91.6
PAHS	67.0	68.4	67.0	78.6	84.5	83.3

The state waived production of School Performance Scores for the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but did release simulated School Performance

Scores. While simulated scores use actual data, they are not official results and should not be considered comparable to other years.

West Baton Rouge's district fared well, with the score dipping less than 1 point from 78.6 in the 2019-2020 school year to 77.9 for the 2020-21 school year. Most all school districts across the state experienced a drop, considered to be in large part due to the challenges of the pandemic and virtual learning.

"We will never be completely satisfied with our school and student performance scores until they are all A's," said Superintendent Wes Watts. "But, in the midst of continually changing dynamics, we saw several bright spots in the simulated data we received. We are proud of the academic growth of our younger students reflected by the simulated K-8 progress score of 90.6 (A), up 3.9 points from 2019, 86.7 (B)."

Academic Foundation: Sparking learning through teacher grants for 20 years!

Often times, teachers have creative and innovative ideas for student learning projects, but lack the funding to implement them. The sole purpose of the West Baton Rouge Foundation for Academic Excellence is to provide grants to WBR teachers to implement these projects in their classrooms, sparking learning and providing students with confidence and curiosity.

Superintendent Wes Watts explained, "Accountability systems have put so much pressure on teachers.



A grant funded keyboards for the Port Allen Elem. music program.

These grants give them the opportunity to teach for the joy of it and help make learning come to life for kids."

Marking its 20th year of service, the Foundation is nearing \$500,000 in funded grants for WBR teachers! Its only annual fundraiser - a golf tournament on April 4 at The Island golf course - is a vital part of its operation.

"The grants have funded many projects that have sparked student interest and engagement," said Principal Laree Taylor. "They have a huge impact on students, teachers and our school." The competitive grant program has funded a wide variety of projects, including technology equipment, math engagement tools, literacy boosters, music education equipment, hands-on science projects, leadership lessons and more.

"We need the support of businesses and individuals to continue this important program," said Director Jarja Carville. "Please join us!" For more information call 225-377-8589, email wbr.foundation@wbrschools.net, or go to the website: wbrfoundation.org.

Watts named La. Superintendent of Year

The Louisiana Association of School Superintendents (LASS) named West Baton Rouge Parish Superintendent Wes Watts the Superintendent of the Year in November. He currently serves as the president of the LASS, and has been Superintendent of the West Baton Rouge School System for seven years.



"This honor actually is a reflection of the work done by everyone in the WBR School System to help our students maximize their potential," said Watts. "I am thankful to be a part of a school system where everyone has the best interests of students at the forefront of all decision making. I appreciate the hard work of board members, central office staff, school leaders, teachers, and faculty, and for the support of the WBR community in making this award possible."

Stein named WBR Principal of Year

Mrs. Kelley Stein has been named the West Baton Rouge Principal of the Year. She is principal of Lukeville Elementary School.



A native and graduate of WBR Parish, Stein received both her Bachelor and Master's degrees from Louisiana State University. She began working at Port Allen Elementary in 2006, where she was a teacher, an Interventionist, as well as a TAP mentor. She became Lukeville Principal in 2020.

"I am very honored to be recognized as the Principal of the Year," she said. "Honestly, this is not an accolade you earn on your own. I have an amazing staff and strong community support. Our staff shares our vision of focusing on the whole child, while providing high-quality instruction. My first goal, which I feel has been accomplished, was to create a culture where staff, students, and our community feel supported and cared for."

Brusly girls basketball team in the hunt for state AAA title

The Brusly girls basketball team was ranked #1 in state Class 3A basketball on January 18, with a 19-3 record. After a semifinal playoff berth last season, the Panthers have been impressive. They maintained a perfect win record well into January, but took one loss battling injuries and recent losses were to the defending 3A champion, and the #1 ranked team in state Class 5A.

"We have done well considering we got a late start because nine of our 14 players were on the volleyball team," said Coach Shawn Bradford. "But our schedule is more difficult in the second half of the season. We are still growing. The girls are committed to working hard, so the sky's the limit."

The team is led by top scorer Tia Anderson, Laila Clark, and senior Alayah Gedward. This is Coach Bradford's first year as Head Coach of the team. He was previously on the Brusly girls team coaching staff for five years, and started his coaching career 18 years ago at Baker High School. Go Panthers!

