

IMPORTANT UTILITY BILL PAYMENT INFORMATION

Residents are reminded that they are still responsible for paying their West Baton Rouge Parish utility bills for water, natural gas, sewer and garbage. These bills will not be waived, and residents should try to make payments if possible so they can avoid outstanding balances carried over into May.

Even though the Utility Office is closed to the public, bill payments for utilities are being accepted by:

- **Drive-thru window** at the WBRP Governmental Building in Port Allen
- **By calling 225-336-2406** and paying by credit or debit card
- **By mail or secure night deposit boxes** in Port Allen, Addis and Brusly. These are being collected daily.
- **By on-line payment** (a processing fee is charged) at www.wbrparish.org.
- **By bank draft.** Call 225-336-2406 to set up the bank draft option. The drafts are processed on the 5th of each month.

The Utility Department Office is being staffed, and meter reading and necessary maintenance projects are continuing. For more information call 225-336-2406.



Shown during the taping of a COVID-19 update are, from left, Addis Mayor David Toups, Port Allen Mayor Richard Lee, Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot, Council Member Atley Walker, Jr. and Brusly Mayor Scot Rhodes.

Parish responds to COVID-19 with variety of actions to curb spread of virus

West Baton Rouge Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot, with the support of the Parish Council and parish employees, have worked since mid-March to curb the spread of the COVID-19 in the parish. Following are some of the actions taken.

Regular written and video updates with numerous parish and municipal officials have been issued by the parish, with the help of the parish Office of Homeland Security, Emergency Preparedness (OHSEP). These updates are available to the media and are posted on the parish website: www.wbrparish.org, and www.facebook.com/WestBatonRougeParish.

President Berthelot, along with OHSEP/9-1-1 and Sheriff's Office leaders, have participated in daily conference calls with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security, Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), Baton Rouge Homeland Security and 9-1-1 and emergency preparedness directors to coordinate preparedness and response to the pandemic.

At the request of Gov. John Bel Edwards, President Berthelot recorded a message urging residents to stay home and practice social distancing. The recorded message calls were made to homes throughout the parish on April 11.

Parish offices are closed to the public, but the Parish is still operational, with departments working a modified schedule and some employees working remotely to reduce contact among the staff. Additional sanitation protocols have also been implemented for those at parish offices. **Residents having questions, concerns or business with the parish can call 225.383.4755, or go to the parish website: www.wbrparish.org for extensive information.**

West Baton Rouge OHSEP Director Deano Moran reviews the number of COVID-19 Coronavirus cases in the parish daily. This information has been entered into the 9-1-1 dispatchers computer system to ensure the safety of first responders when they respond to calls.

Parish President Berthelot is working closely with the West Baton Rouge Chamber of Commerce to help local businesses navigate the federal programs enacted to assist businesses.

See more parish updates on page 3

GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WBR PARISH COUNCIL - Meets 2nd & 4th Thursday of month, 5:30 p.m., Parish Council Building, 225-383-4755, www.wbrparish.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 3rd 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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Upcoming activities at Museum

Improvements at the West Baton Rouge Museum

The West Baton Rouge Museum remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but is taking advantage of this downtime to undergo several capital improvement projects. New sidewalks, a memorial garden, landscaping, and a fresh coat of paint are all currently underway. "We have a few more projects we would like to see completed," said Executive Director Angélique Bergeron, "as long as they can be accomplished at a safe social distance."

Follow TheWBRM Online

For updates and our latest projects, follow the West Baton Rouge Museum on social media or visit our website (www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.com). A National Parks Service's African American Heritage Grant funded the production of 6 videos for two of the historic Allendale cabins on the museum's grounds. These videos, part of the new Cuttin' Cane Ain't All We Do tour, were debuted at the museum's 2020 Martin Luther King Day celebration and are now available online at <https://westbatonrougemuseum.org/484/Media>. More digital content will be coming, including virtual exhibit tours and video visits from Grandmother Marguerite's Trunk sharing how families at home can engage in historic pastimes using objects around the house.

Museum Programs Cancelled

The West Baton Rouge Museum has cancelled programs through the summer, including the annual Blast From The Past Summer Camp and Teachers' Institute. All fees will be refunded. For more information, email luckett@wbrmuseum.org or call 225-336-2422, extension 211.

Blues After School

The inaugural year of West Baton Rouge Museum's Blues After School program set to run September 2019 – April 2020 came to a screeching halt due to the COVID-19 crisis leaving museum staff, students, and music teachers stunned and sad. After a week of working and "going to school" from home, organizers realized the program could continue to meet online, making all participants smile. Special thanks goes to program partners, Rockin Mozart Music Academy, LLC for creating detailed video tutorials for students to continue to practice their craft at home, and to local Blues artists Henry Turner, Jr. and Carter Wilkinson for sharing time and talent by meeting with the Blues After School kids via Zoom.

Blues After School is a free music enrichment program providing instrument and blues band instruction taught by music educators and special guests, paired with cultural, historical, and arts related activities taught by museum staff. For middle school aged students interested in joining next school year, please email WBRM Director of Programs, Jeannie Luckett at Luckett@wbrmuseum.org.

FROM SLAVERY



Shown is the logo for the 6-part video series on the historic Allendale cabins on the museum grounds. The series can be seen on the Museum's website: wbrmuseum.org.



Scenes from the Blues After Schools program prior to the Stay At Home order. The program was moved on-line thanks to the participating artists.

WEST BATON ROUGE LIBRARY

YOUR ON-LINE LIBRARY IS OPEN 24/7!
WWW.WBRPL.COM/RESOURCE-WIZARD

With your library card you have all of this at home!

Get access to e-books, audio books, movies, comics, music.

You also have access to homework help, professional software training, craft and hobby ideas and much, MUCH more!

CHECK OUT ALL THAT IS AVAILABLE TO YOU ON-LINE THROUGH YOUR LIBRARY!

WWW.WBRPL.COM/RESOURCE-WIZARD



Some planning/development services are continuing

The following services are fully functional in the WBR Office of Community Planning and Development: the issuance of building and subcontractor permits, along with their inspections; enforcement of grass complaints; contractor registration and oversight; the intake of plats and zoning cases (hearings are delayed); community planning and infrastructure development/project management on public works projects; and our environmental/safety programs.

Burn ban still in effect here

The State Fire Marshal has a statewide Burn Ban in effect because the smoke expelled from the burning process is an airborne irritant, noted Fire Chief Tim Crockett. "This can be harmful to anyone suffering from upper respiratory complications. COVID-19 attacks the upper respiratory tract and can quickly compromise the health of those with underlying health conditions. COVID-19 is not just an 'old folks' virus. This virus is affecting and taking the lives of those old and young."



is published quarterly as a cooperative endeavor of West Baton Rouge Parish government agencies to educate residents about projects, activities and services in the parish. It is produced by Peacock Communications, LLC. Comments can be sent to: ellie@peacockcommunications.com, or call 225-929-9661.

No decisions yet on summer rec programs

The West Baton Rouge Parish Recreation Department would like to thank everyone for their patience during these trying times. All the parish parks and centers will continue to be closed to the public until further notice.

The walking trails at all parks are still open to the public, but residents are asked to use good judgment and safe social distancing practices when walking the trails. Our office is open for phone calls Monday-Thursday from 8 am to 5 pm. No future bookings are being taken at this time, but cancellations or rescheduling any bookings due to the COVID-19 are being taken. You can reach us at 225-336-2423.

Decisions on the summer event schedule will be made after May 1, when Gov. John Bel Edwards announces whether Stay-At-Home orders will be tapered back. For updates go to: www.facebook.com/WestBatonRougeParksandRecreation.

Mosquito spraying, testing scaled back, but continues

Mosquito Control operations have been scaled back some, but spraying was underway in two weeks of April due to an increase in nuisance mosquito activity and numerous complaint calls.

Also, out of an abundance of caution over the complications arising from the possibility of contracting a mosquito-borne disease and Covid-19 at the same time, operations pertaining to collecting and testing mosquito samples for disease presence continue. If samples test positive for disease, control efforts will be implemented.

Mosquito control response to residential nuisance complaints is suspended at this time. Daytime larviciding of roadside ditches continues as needed. The pickup of rodent bait stations and mosquito larvicide tablets has been suspended. If anyone has questions or concerns about mosquito control, call 225-214-5900, leave a message, and the phone call will be returned.

Animal Control operations limited, adoptions by appt.

Most animal control operations by the parish have been suspended at this time, including regular stray animal pickup, responding to trap requests, and owner surrendering of animals.

Animal Control Officers are responding to emergency calls only, such as bite cases, threats to public safety, and cruelty/neglect cases where the life of an animal is in danger.

The Animal Shelter is closed to the public, adoptions are by appointment only, and only one person is allowed at a time for adoptions or for reclaiming their animal from impoundment. For more information, call 225-336-2428, leave a message, and the phone call will be returned. Information is also available at: www.facebook.com/WestBatonRougeParishShelterandAnimalControl.

Sales tax can be reported online

While the West Baton Rouge Parish Revenue Department is closed to public access, taxpayers are encouraged to use the online tools at Sales Tax Online (<https://secure.salestaxonline.com>) or Parish E-File (<https://parishe-file.revenue.louisiana.gov>). Taxpayers can submit and pay sales/use tax reports, change mailing addresses, and more. For taxpayer assistance, please call 225-336-2408.



DRAINAGE PROJECTS CONTINUE... Two major drainage projects are well underway and are continuing with limited crews during April. Shown above at left is the widening and addition of a channel to the River Mill overflow canal project in Brusly; and at right is the canal widening of Sugar Mill and Coulee Canals. That project includes re-sloping and adding a shelf on the canals.

Phone message from Pres. Berthelot to residents

"As we work together to slow the spread of the coronavirus, our parish needs your help. **We are among the top 20 in the country for deaths from this virus** (according to New York Times database). This is too serious for us not to follow the governor's stay at home order. Most of your time should be spent at home and only go out to buy necessities once a week. We know this virus is impacting everyone. It knows NO boundaries. We also know staying home, social distancing and good hygiene help to slow the spread. We will get through this, but your compliance will make all the difference. Thank you for doing your part to help our community stay healthy and save lives."

EVERYONE SHOULD



Clean your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid close contact

- Keep about 6 feet distance between yourself and others.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home as much as possible.
- Remember that people without symptoms can spread the virus.



Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities. The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unable to remove the mask without assistance.
 - The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.



Clean and disinfect

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

WBR Sheriff's Office changes operations to maintain security during Stay At Home order

The West Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office has taken numerous steps to secure and protect parish residents and deputies during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. "This emergency situation has forced us to change the way we think and do things, and is requiring us to become more nimble, efficient and safe in our operations," said Sheriff Mike Cazes. "Part of what we are doing now will remain in place in the future, but be assured that the Sheriff's Office is working hard 24 hours a day, seven days a week to protect and serve the people of West Baton Rouge."

Among the actions taken by the Sheriff's Office are:

- **Ramping up the use of technology** by filing reports of complaints over the phone to reduce person-to-person contact. The Sheriff's Office has made significant investments in technology in recent years, and this is paying off during this emergency period.

- **Reducing contact by deputies with the public, but maintaining a high law enforcement presence** in the parish. This includes simply issuing a summons to those arrested for misdemeanor and non-violent charges, rather than booking those individuals in the parish jail. Those arrested for violent crimes are still booked into jail and will remain in jail until a district judge holds a video bond hearing.

- **Closing the Sheriff's Office to the public.** However, it is still operational for all activities and staff is available to answer calls. Residents needing assistance can

call 225-343-9234. Those needing to pay a fine, ticket or taxes can do so by going to the Sheriff's Office website: www.wbrsheriff.org and following the prompts from the home page. Crimes can also be reported on the website.



Remember: the Stay At Home order is in effect until May 1!

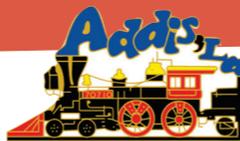
- **The West Baton Rouge Parish Jail has been closed to visitors** and the Sheriff's Office has established assistance for inmates to make video calls to family. In addition, every person in the jail, including inmates, jail employees and any Sheriff's Office staff that enters the jail, is monitored daily for symptoms of COVID-19. Temperatures are taken for inmates and staff twice daily. Those who want to put money in inmate accounts must do that by money order. Cash is no longer accepted.

- **Sheriff Cazes and office leaders remain in frequent communication with Parish President Riley "PeeWee" Berthelot** and other officials, and participate in the parish video update reports.

- **Detectives remain on duty and are conducting investigations** with additional protocols in place, and are now rotating schedules to limit exposure among the detective unit.

- **All personnel have been issued masks, gloves and sanitizer** with instructions to disinfect their units, and the Sheriff's Office is also negotiating pricing to have all units and the offices sanitized.

CONTACT THE WEST BATON ROUGE SHERIFF'S OFFICE
225-343-9234 or www.wbrsheriff.org



Spring concerts cancelled, town continues operations

The Town of Addis managed to get in only one of its three Live At 5 On the Westside concerts this Spring. Two concerts were cancelled because of the Stay At Home order by Gov. John Bel Edwards due to the coronavirus. Mayor David Toups said the concerts will not be rescheduled, but the town is planning to hold its fall concert series, which starts in October.

In addition, all town parks and the Addis Community Center were closed until further notice.

RESIDENTS URGED NOT TO THROW WIPES IN SEWER SYSTEM

Mayor Toups said the town had an issue with the sewer system being stopped up because residents were throwing baby wipes and paper towels into the toilets during the period when toilet paper was scarce in area stores. "Even if the packaging on the wipes says they are degradable, they are not," said Mayor Toups. "They cause major blockages for our sewer system, so we ask residents not to use them."

TOWN HALL STILL OPERATIONAL

Although Addis Town Hall is closed to the public, Mayor Toups said the town is still operational, calls are being answered, and town employees are still working while practicing social distancing. However, he noted that town projects, such as drainage and road projects, are on hold until May, when the Stay At Home order is expected to be lifted.

TOP 10 REASONS FOR THE CENSUS

#1 - Why do it? It's the law, and it's how legislative districts are drawn.



#2 - Who counts? Every living person, even if you are not a citizen. The Supreme Court says so.



#3 - It means government funds. Data helps get grant funding done. It means money!



#4 - It's often used in planning - schools, healthcare, housing, etc. New schools! More doctors!



#5 - It is used for transportation. It brings roads and mass transit to the general population. Better roads!



#6 - It's used in business planning, siting factories, delivering goods, business expansions. It means jobs!



#7 - It's used in online mapping of services, routes, and more.



#8 - It's used in emergency planning, and it determines aid after hurricanes, fires, tornados and other crisis situations.

Complete the Census on-line: www.2020Census.gov



Walking trail remains open, distancing urged!

The Town of Brusly has kept the Mississippi River levee-top trail open for residents, but everyone is asked to cooperate by remaining 6 feet apart and not walking in groups. Above is a sign the town posted as a reminder to those using the trail.

 [Facebook.com/BruslyTownHall](https://www.facebook.com/BruslyTownHall)

Shape the



of your community.

BE COUNTED IN THE 2020 CENSUS

Ensure that Brusly and West Baton Rouge Parish get the funding and political representation needed for the next decade! Census numbers are used to determine billions of dollars in funding for things like community services, Head Start, public transportation and roads, housing assistance, grants and much more!

**COMPLETE THE CENSUS:
RESPOND ONLINE AT
WWW.2020CENSUS.GOV
OR BY PHONE OR MAIL IN YOUR
CENSUS FORM**



Mayor gives report on operations during coronavirus shut-down

The City of Port Allen is still operational, but in a limited capacity under the shadow of COVID-19, said Mayor Richard Lee. While city hall is closed, employees are working staggered work hours to reduce contact, however, the city's utility bill drive-thru window is open from 8 am until 4 pm Monday thru Friday.

BUILDING PERMITS:

Building permits are being taken on a case by case basis, with plans being delivered to the city via the Utility drive-thru window, and subsequent contact via phone and email.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS:

The city's contractor for this year's road improvement project has been delayed, but Mayor Lee is hoping that work gets underway by May; and work on the city's extensive sewer improvement project is continuing and should be complete by the end of May.

The city has received a \$50,000 grant for repairs to deteriorating water pipelines on Maryland Avenue between 10th and 12th Streets and to 8th Street between California Avenue and Maryland Avenue. Mayor Lee said that project will begin later this year.

DISPOSE OF BABY WIPES, PAPER TOWELS, GREASE ONLY IN TRASH

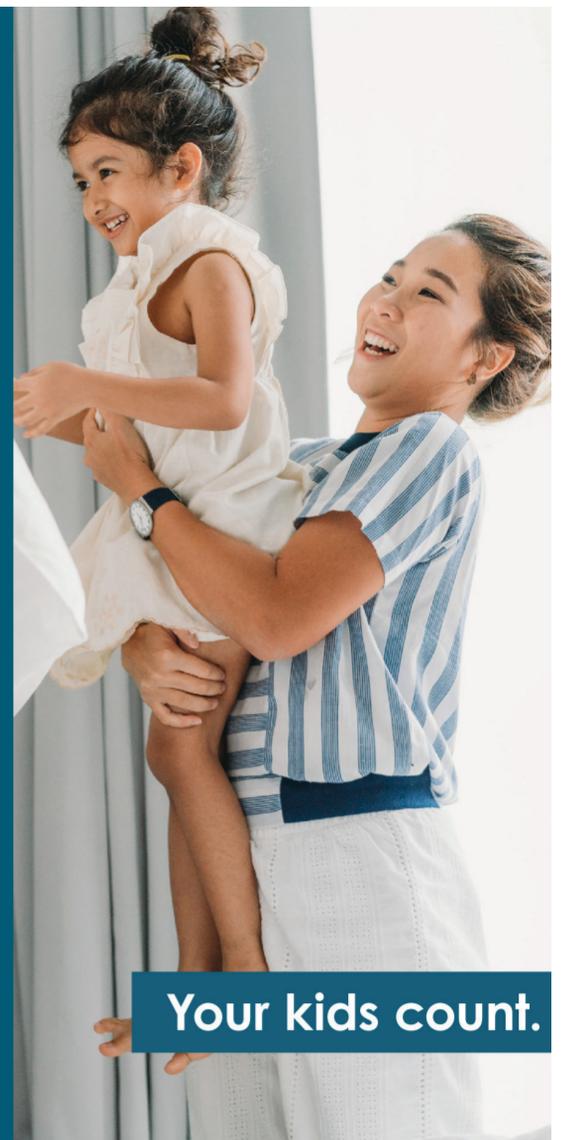
Finally Mayor Lee asked residents to please refrain from putting baby wipes or paper towels down toilets, and from putting grease down drains. "These items are clogging up our sewer drain system because the sewer pumps are not equipped to shred them. Every time it gets clogged it costs the city thousands to repair. The grease is a real problem because it hardens like a rock in the pipeline, and it takes expensive chemicals to clear the clogs," he said. "All of these items should only be disposed of in the trash or a local collection site."

YOUR CHALLENGE:

COMPLETE THE CENSUS TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF PORT ALLEN

Responses to the 2020 Census will shape how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are distributed to local communities annually.

WWW.2020CENSUS.GOV



Your kids count.

Visitors, events come to halt, questions abound for tourism

The West Baton Rouge Convention & Visitors Bureau went from planning for Kite Fest Louisiane, handling numerous events at the Convention Center, and welcoming visitors to cancelling Kite Fest, events and closing the Visitors Center - all in a very short period of time.

"Our offices are closed, but we are working very hard to make plans to adapt to this changing tourism environment," said Director Kathy Gautreau. "We talked about postponing Kite Fest, but finally made the decision to cancel it," she said. All events at the Convention Center were cancelled from late March through May, but Gautreau said fortunately most of the clients who had booked events said they would re-schedule once the center is operational again. "I am hopeful that we can pick up most of those bookings again soon," she said.

Meanwhile, Gautreau is working with the directors of the La. Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus to develop a three-year marketing plan for each bureau state-wide, including West Baton Rouge. "We are working together daily and developing ideas to help get tourism back on track for our state and our parish," she said.

"We will take a hit to our budget, but we don't know how much yet," she said. "We have a reserve fund, and we are hoping that some federal or state funds will become available to help the tourism agencies."

The next event sponsored by the tourism agency is its popular Oldies But Goodies Fest, which is set for September 12 and 13. "Everything is still on track to hold that event at this time," she said. It will be followed by the Bureau's other two special events: Veterans on Parade and the Westside Christmas Fest.

For more information on the WBR Convention & Visitors Bureau go to www.westbatonrouge.net or to the facebook page: www.facebook.com/WBRCVB.



One popular tourist attraction, the West Baton Rouge Museum, has been closed for over a month, but the Port Allen Riverfront Development remains one of the attractions still open.



Keep up with coming events in WBR: [Facebook.com/WBRCVB](https://www.facebook.com/WBRCVB)



Chamber provides ways to support local businesses

The uncertainty created for many of our Chamber family in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic can not be overstated, said Chamber Executive Director Jamie Hanks. "During this time, we must think about how we can support our community and local businesses from home and after the 'Stay at Home' order has been lifted."

Recently, the West Baton Rouge Small Business Council became a standing committee under the Chamber umbrella. "These entrepreneurs will be essential in the coming months as we rebuild. The vision of the Council is to assist local small business owners and employees in creating effective grassroots actions, tools, strategies and best practices to help small businesses successfully compete in today's rapidly changing economy. The timing of the collaboration couldn't have been more critical for our parish," Hanks noted. "This will surely be a WIN-WIN for both organizations, especially now more than ever before."

New Chamber Board Member Bridget Easley will be chairing the new committee for the Chamber. She said, "Small businesses are of vital importance to our local community. They support our children's sports teams, participate in fundraisers, and help increase our tax bases. Additionally, they are the first ones to employ your parents or your kids when they need a job."

"When you think about it," she continued, "the diverse assortment of the small businesses in our community are part of our families in some way. During the current unfortunate events, it's time to support your family and shop small! Can you even imagine West Baton Rouge without any of its small, local businesses? I surely cannot! We are #InThisTogether."



What can you do to support local small businesses from a computer or phone?

Like, Comment & Share - Never underestimate the power of social media – we are depending on this more than ever to spread the word of businesses' specials, services and showing they are still "open for business."

Tag - Similarly, tagging a friend in a business' posts can help them reach both new and loyal customers. If you take the time to tag a friend who would be interested in their services, it will greatly boost their engagement on social media.

Use Delivery or Pickup Options - Many of our restaurants have been using this to feed families, as well as to successfully adjust efforts to maintain their employees.

Shop Online - Shopping online is more important than ever to show your patronage for our local, small businesses. The Chamber has been continuously promoting products through our social media platforms for products now offered through the virtual world.

Purchase a Gift Card - Many of our businesses are issuing gift cards for customers to use later. This provides valuable cash flow they can use to support themselves while their doors are shut or slowed down.

Sandra Hughes, Board Chair, echoes these sentiments. "Now, more than ever, we need to support our local businesses, especially the small businesses. They are an integral part of our community and help make our parish the outstanding parish that it is! I challenge everyone to help our businesses out by showing your support by purchasing a gift card, shopping online or ordering a meal from one of our local restaurants."

And always remember, we are #InThisTogether!



Homeowners can now file for homestead exemptions electronically on Assessor's website

"We are pleased to announce effective April 1st homestead exemption applications can now be submitted electronically to the Assessor's Office," said Chief Deputy Guerin. By accessing the **E-Applications** navigation tab at the top of the Assessor's website homepage, new homeowners are connected to a portal allowing for the electronic submission of homestead applications by completing a streamlined three step process.

- Step #1 - collects primary information regarding the property owner and the residence.
- Step #2 collects more detailed information regarding the residence.
- Step #3 is the actual submission of the application. Once the application has been reviewed and approved by the Assessor's Office staff, a notification email, along with a homestead exemption receipt,

is sent to the homeowner.

Guerin emphasizes the **E-Application** portal is presently geared to work with laptops and computer workstations running Windows version 8 and higher and using any of the following web browsers: Chrome, Edge and Firefox. Discussions are also ongoing to make the application process compatible with mobile devices in the future.

Anyone with questions or

needing assistance with the new electronic application process should contact the Assessor's Office at 225-344-6777.

As always the Assessor's website is available 24/7 for access to valuable parcel information including ownership data, assessed values and legal descriptions as well as aerial photography and digital maps of West Baton Rouge Parish. You can visit the site at www.wbrassessor.org.



The E-Application for homestead exemptions can be accessed on the Assessor's Office website (shown above). Click on the button at the top (in red) named E-Applications.

Assessor's Office open during COVID-19 uncertainty

While the West Baton Rouge Parish Courthouse has been closed to public traffic, the Assessor's Office has remained operational during these COVID-19 times, albeit with a limited staff.

"All telephone calls, emails and fax documents directed to the Assessor's Office have been and will continue to be answered during these uncertain times," said Chief Deputy Assessor Chris Guerin.

The Assessor's Office has continued to update its database on a weekly basis for recent property transfers and has been able to fulfill all requests for documents, such as plat maps, parcel listings and property descriptions via email and/or fax.

Applications for homestead exemptions, special assessments and use value also continue to be received and processed. Due to the restricted access to the Courthouse, special assessment applications and use value applications are currently being handled via email, regular mail and fax.

PORT OF

CONTAINER ON BARGE SERVICE



Success of SEACOR AMH, LLC's container-on-barge services at the Port leads to major expansion of container storage capacity.

The public/private partnership between the Port of Greater Baton Rouge and SEACOR AMH, LLC continues to produce increases in the number of containers handled at the Inland Rivers Marine Terminal at the Port's North Line Road facility. In 2017, SEACOR AMH handled 8,018 containers there. In 2018, that number increased to 13,685 and continued to rise in 2019 to 14,000 containers.



Due to this increase in container movement, the Port has undertaken an expansion of the Inland Rivers Marine Terminal's container storage yard. The expansion is estimated to cost approximately \$4.5 million and will include 3.5 acres of concrete poured to expand the Port's container storage capacity.

Port Executive Director Jay Hardman said, "We are excited about the success of the COB service and the opportunity to expand our capacity. Every container that goes down the Mississippi River to New Orleans for export is one less 18-wheel truck on our roads and bridges."

For more information, contact Greg Johnson: 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



A message to parents from Superintendent Watts on finishing the school year

Dear Parents,

As we navigate this COVID-19 crisis, I want to say how proud I am of our passionate, committed, and talented teachers and staff in WBR, who have worked hard to guide our students through this time. These folks are going above and beyond to deliver outstanding educational and social services, even during their own personal challenges.

We have four major goals in getting through this crisis:

- To support our students emotionally by having their teachers stay in contact with them weekly.
- To provide as much instruction as possible through on-line learning and other instructional resources.
- To provide meals for the children until the end of the school year on May 21.
- To help our seniors and high school students in mastering the information needed to pass and/or keep their grades up. (see more on this below)

We will continue the present home learning program until the end of this academic school year on May 21. Please encourage your children to spend time each day working on their academic skills and accessing the resources and activities provided. We recommend that students spend at least two hours a day reading, working problems, accessing online resources, and completing the activities provided by teachers. Doing this will go a long way in helping students progress academically in preparation for the 2020-20201 school year.

We understand that everyone is anxious about **grades and promotion**. Teachers will be using student work prior to the March 13, 2020 school closure date to calculate and average grades. We also have options for all students to improve their grades, which may include work currently being done. An emphasis will be placed on high school credit courses since those impact transcripts and graduation.

More detailed information about our grading plans and procedures can be found on our website, www.wbrschools.net, click on the COVID-19 Grading and Promotion Plan box. **Our focus is to help students continue to develop skills and progress academically while schools are closed, our focus is Not to provide more work for students just to get a grade.**

Meals will be provided through May 21, and plans for summer school are still in the process of being developed. If you have any questions please reach out to your child's teacher, a school administrator, or someone at our school board office. We want to help you navigate this COVID-19 Event.

Sincerely,
Wes
Wes Watts
WBR Schools Superintendent

Public/business partnership saves the day in feeding kids

A partnership between the West Baton Rouge School Board and three local restaurants has helped local school children have lunches and helps the restaurants keep employees working! The meals program will continue at Caneview School, Brusly High School and Port Allen Middle School until the end of the school year on May 21.

The cooks at Bergeron's Cajun Meats, Court Street Cafe and Walk-Ons are preparing approximately 1,100 meals between all three schools, and a cafeteria worker and volunteers hand out the meals in a drive-by fashion five days a week from 11 am until 12:30 pm. A student 18-years-old or younger is required to be present for meal pick-up.

Superintendent Wes Watts said under the stay-at-home order, the cafeteria workers cannot be required to go to work, and many of them care for elderly family members or are considered high-risk themselves.

The restaurant owners were thrilled with the agreement because it has enabled them to avoid some lay-offs while struggling with closed doors due to the coronavirus. Bergeron's owner and Parish Councilman Craig "Moonie" Bergeron said, "This has been a real blessing and it has saved four jobs in our business. We are throwing in extra treats in some meals to say thank you. We appreciate it so much."



Shown in the two photos above are meals being carted to the drive-thru area of Caneview School for distribution. Shown at left are meals being prepared at Brusly High School. Approximately 1,100 meals are made daily by cooks of Bergeron's, Court Street Cafe and Walk-Ons to feed WBR students.

Eckert a finalist for global Teacher Prize

Brusly High School teacher Kimberly Eckert, who was named the Louisiana Teacher of the Year in 2018, has been selected as one of 50 finalists for the \$1 million Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize.

Each year, the Varkey Foundation partners with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to recognize a teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the teaching community. To be considered, a teacher must be nominated by a former finalist then complete a comprehensive application process.

Eckert is Louisiana's first Global Teacher finalist and just one of five finalists from the United States this year. Since being named Louisiana's top teacher, Eckert has spearheaded the Educator's Rising program, which focuses on elevating and diversifying the teaching community by encouraging high school students to begin training for a teaching career. Later this year 10 finalists will be announced. On October 12, the Global Teacher Prize winner will be announced in London.

