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Chamber Connection

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entire newsletter, visit
www.cenlachamber.org.

From the Chairman – Martin Johnson

Central Louisiana was placed on center stage in April, when LPB featured the region on a broadcast of *Louisiana Public Square*. Several of our economic development partners joined our Chamber President, Elton Pody, in telling the rest of the State of Louisiana about some of the positive things we have going on in our community to ensure our economic future. Thanks to Board Member Deborah Randolph for organizing the event.

The Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA) had a meeting to bring many of our economic development partners up to date on our

activities. We discussed our plans to implement the recommendations of the Wadley-Donovan study received back in Nov 07 and discussed continued use of the Louisiana Scholars Program as a tool to address the needs of our workforce.

Our Chamber was the first in the State of Louisiana to adopt and endorse Louisiana Scholars and several of our Chamber members recently went through training and have already gone into three local schools to explain to our students the importance of taking the challenging curriculum recommended by the Program.

Our business leaders have also been able to provide first hand knowledge of what's going on in the work world to better prepare students. It has been said that 70 percent of jobs available to our youth after high school have not even been invented yet, so we must continue to stress the importance of being prepared.

While recruiting new companies to our area is ongoing, retaining and growing our existing businesses and addressing their needs are equally important. We are also planning an update to our website to better market our area to developers and companies looking to expand to Central Louisiana.

Blueprint Louisiana to Provide Legislative Update

Blueprint Louisiana will hold a meeting for its Alexandria Region on Tuesday, May 20, 12:00pm-1:30pm. The event is free and will take place at the Best Western Conference Center located at 2720 North MacArthur Drive in Alexandria. Blueprint Louisiana is a nonprofit organization focused on efforts to identify and implement essential changes to fundamentally improve Louisiana.

They were heavily involved with the first two special legislative sessions and is currently very actively engaged in the ongoing regular legislative session in Baton Rouge. Many accomplishments have been made and Blueprint would like to share the progress. They will provide a recap of the special sessions, an update on the regular session and also look to the future.

The event is being sponsored by Red River Bank and the Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce. All Chamber members are invited and there is no charge to attend. Please RSVP to (318) 484-7760 or email Shannon.Harvey@cleco.com; or for more information visit www.blueprintlouisiana.org.
Source: Blueprint Louisiana

Chamber Providing Opportunity to Visit Your Legislator

The Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce will host its annual Legislative Reception taking place on Wednesday, May 28, 6:00pm-8:00pm, at the Pentagon Barracks in Baton Rouge. The reception is part of the Central Louisiana Day at the Legislature event that is planned and organized by the Chamber's Legislative Committee. The purpose of the event is to show appreciation to our legislators and provide the opportunity to "meet and greet" your legislator. Food and refreshments will be provided to all in attendance and all Chamber members are welcome. Call the Chamber office at (318) 442-6671 for more information or if your business is interested in sponsoring the event.

by: Curman Gaines, Governmental Affairs Division Chair

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.cenlachamber.org

Schedule of Events

May 5, Legislative Cmte
May 6, Ribbon Cutting
May 6, High School-to-Work Cmte
May 8, Morning Coffee
May 8, Post-Secondary Education Cmte
May 12, Legislative Cmte
May 13, Executive Cmte
May 13, Ribbon Cutting
May 14, Infrastructure Cmte
May 15, Board of Directors
May 19, Strategic Luncheon
May 20, Ribbon Cutting
May 21, Ribbon Cutting
May 22, Quality of Life Cmte
May 22, Ribbon Cutting
May 23, Ribbon Cutting
May 28, Cenla Day at the Legislature
May 29, Business After Ours

Welcome New Members

West Lakes Estates LLC
New York Life-Charles A Gwaltney LUTCF
PAC Environmental
K and R Aviation dba Open Air
Specialty Hitches & RV Center LLC
Sassy Girl

April Ribbon Cuttings

KP Jewelers
White Oaks Funeral Home
West Lakes Estates
Healthy Living Marketplace
Hampton Inn & Suites
First Federal Bank Financial Center
Port of Alexandria Transient Warehouse

State Adjutant General Visits the Chamber

Major General Bennett C. Landreneau visited the Chamber on April 28 to provide an update to the Chamber's Military Affairs Committee. He spoke about the Louisiana National Guard's many ongoing missions and organizational changes taking place: operational changes, improved force structure, construction projects, and recent deployments. The transformation of the Guard from a Strategic Reserve into an operational force serving alongside active duty counterparts has provided the citizens of Louisiana with a much more capable force to respond to state emergencies.

Some of the Guard units will begin moving back to the Guard's New Orleans headquarters in 2009. While most of the headquarters will be moving back to Jackson Barracks, a significant portion will remain at Camp Beauregard. Currently under construction at the Pineville installation is a \$42 million Joint Force Headquarters Building that will also house one of the Guard's Operations Centers which is critical to responding to state emergencies. Esler Field has over \$50 million of construction projects completed/ongoing to establish it as the Guard's Aviation Headquarters and maintenance facility, along with a consolidated vehicle maintenance facility.

Since 9-11, the Guard has deployed over 6,500 troops. Currently approximately 250 are deployed overseas and about 600 are in training to depart within the next 2-3 months. The Guard also has around 450 soldiers alerted for mobilization later this year.

by: Mary Ann Clary, Military Affairs Division Chair

Chamber's Education Division Moving Forward

The subcommittee's of the Division of Education continue their work. High School-to-Work Committee is undertaking an effort to expand opportunities for earning the GED to potentially provide more individuals in our workforce with an equivalent of a high school diploma. The Quality of Life Committee is meeting with representatives from LSU Eunice on the possibility of having certificate programs in hospitality management offered in Central Louisiana. The Post-Secondary Education Committee is surveying employers regarding specific needs for which post-secondary training is needed and will direct those employers to the appropriate provider.

by: Dr. Thomas Armstrong, Education Division Chair

Cenla Highlighted on LPB

The evening of April 21, a film crew from the Louisiana Public Broadcasting System recorded a *Louisiana Public Square* segment focusing on Economic Development in Central Louisiana at the Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center. The 30-minute segment was broadcast by LPB on April 24 and 27. The program is available on DVD for purchase from LPB at www.lpb.org.

by: Brady Baudin, Economic Development Division Chair

2008 Membership Directory Update

The Chamber's directory is published once a year and with changes each month is immediately not an all-inclusive directory. Visit www.cenlachamber.org/pdf/2008DirectoryUpdate-01May08.pdf to print the latest update and place inside of your copy. We encourage you to utilize the services of other members as much as possible for your business and personal needs. The directory is available online at www.cenlachamber.org, where it is updated monthly.

Red Coat of the Quarter

Chairman of the Board, Martin Johnson, presented the Red Coat Ambassador of the Quarter Award for Jan-Mar 08, to Eloise Andries of Rapid Furniture, during the Business After Ours at the Hampton Inn & Suites on April 17. The award is sponsored by Cajun Landing. We are very grateful to all our Red Coats for volunteering their time to be outstanding representatives of the Chamber.

Renaissance Home Breaks Ground

The Renaissance Home for Youth Executive Committee broke ground for the new Education Center located on the Renaissance campus on April 4. The facility will be 8,400 square feet in size and cost \$1.1 million to construct. Renaissance is a community-based receiving home for youth in support of the juvenile justice system. It provides secure detention, a group home and emergency shelter to juveniles in Rapides and surrounding parishes.

Membership Renewals: In April 56 businesses, organizations and individuals renewed membership with the Chamber. We want to say "Thanks" for continued support of economic development and growth in Central Louisiana.