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Enclosed articles are abbreviated; to view entire newsletter, visit www.cenlachamber.org.

Chamber Connection

From the Chairman – Martin Johnson

Hurricane Gustav impacted 34 Louisiana parishes including many in Central Louisiana. Many non-profit organizations and other businesses are stepping up to provide temporary housing for many South Louisiana residents as well as some from right here in Central Louisiana. The response and teamwork by Governor Jindal, other state, federal and local officials were outstanding.

The Louisiana Department of Economic Development launched a call center for Louisiana's Hurricane-Affected Businesses. The Business Recovery Center was activated to provide recovery-related resources and contacts for

businesses requiring assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav. The call center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at (877) 610-3533.

The Chamber is doing its part to assist the many businesses and individuals. I received a call thanking Jay Ellington, the Chamber's Director of Workforce Development, for passing out maps of Central Louisiana to local hotels. We are making an effort to assess the impact of Hurricane Gustav on local business, so if there is something we might be able to assist you with call Rick Ranson at the Chamber, (318) 442-6671. Let us all do everything we can to assist

those impacted by the storm.

I would like to welcome the following who have been selected to join our Board of Directors during 2009: Brandon Harrington with Red River Bank, Brooks Harris with Brooks Harris Wealth Management, Kerry LaBauve with Meyer Meyer LaCroix & Hixon, Scott Newcomer with Capital One Bank, Rod Noles with Noles-Frye Realty, Reldon Owens with The Bossier Group, Jim Shirvinski with Union Tank Car, and Monica Weisul. We thank all of them for agreeing to volunteer their time and talents to make Central Louisiana better for all of us.

Phase 1 of Intermodel Facility Study Complete

The future of the manufacturing segment of the Cenla economy revolves around the ability to move raw materials and finished goods into and out of our community more smoothly and most importantly, with more efficiency. As an integral piece in that puzzle, the economic development arm of the Chamber, the Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance (CLEDA), contracted with the GENESIS Consulting Group to study the feasibility of establishing an intermodel transportation facility somewhere in Cenla.

An intermodel facility basically involved the gathering together (the more closely, the better) of several means of transferring and transporting goods among barges, trains, trucks and airplanes; time and money being the hallmarks. Cenla is blessed with a viable, expanding red River port facility, a thriving and expanding highway system, several converging railroads and an international airport, the "ideal spectrum of raw transportation means".

Moving from the "What If" question to a more definitive, "Yes/No, Here's How" answer requires detailed analysis of current and anticipated freight volumes; how many and what type businesses would utilize the facility; what will the costs and timeframes be; how will it be operated and governed; and most importantly, where will it be located?

Phase I of that research was recently completed and presented to CLEDA members and local companies contributing input data to the research. The full report can be found at www.cenlachamber.org/downloads/genesisreportphase1.pdf. The study findings appear to justify more in-depth clarification of some of the above-mentioned criteria. Discussions are ongoing with GENESIS to determine the scope, timeframe and expense of this all-important deeper inquiry.

Just one more visible example of how Cenla remains on the move!
by Elton Pody, Chamber President

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.cenlachamber.org

Chamber Co-Sponsors Job Fair for Persons with disabilities

Each Oct, various state and local organizations conduct formal job fairs statewide aimed at matching employers seeking qualified, reliable workers with persons classified as having disabilities who fit those job needs. This year's local fair which the Chamber is co-sponsoring with the Medicaid Purchase Plan, Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, Louisiana Workforce Commission and several other related agencies, will be held on Tuesday, Oct 7 at 9:00am – 12:00 noon, at Best Western Inn & Suites and Conference Center. Local employers seeking excellent workers are enthusiastically encouraged to enjoy a free sales table at the event. Those interested can get further information by contacting Eric Irby, Louisiana Workforce Commission, at the local Career Solutions Center, (318) 487-5547. Individual job seekers wishing to attend should call Diana DeWesse, (318) 487-5261, for more information on the services being offered.

by Jay Ellington, Director, Workforce Development

Senator Vitter Speaks to Chamber

On August 20, United States Senator David Vitter spoke at the Chamber's Strategic Luncheon, sponsored by Union Tank Car. He spoke of high energy costs and pledged continued support for Fort Polk to gain another 4,000 soldiers and the development of roads such as Hwy 28; two of Cenla's highest priorities. He is working to secure funding to upgrade Fort Polk's barracks and to accelerate the completion of Hwy 28 West; \$166 million and \$23 million respectively.

Nonfarm Job Growth Continues

Seasonally adjusted nonfarm jobs in Louisiana grew by 30,000 workers between July 2007 and July 2008. The unemployment rate for the state was 3.9 percent in July, compared to the national rate of 5.7 percent. In Central Louisiana, LaSalle Parish unemployment was lowest at 3.2 percent, while Concordia was highest at 8.3. Those in between were: Rapides – 4.4, Evangeline – 4.7, Winn – 5.1, Grant – 5.2, Vernon – 5.3, Natchitoches – 5.5, Avoyelles – 6.0, Allen – 6.0, and Catahoula – 6.7. For more information on the state's July 2008 employment data, visit www.LAWORKS.net and select Labor Market Information from the left-side menu. Then select Monthly Employment Statistics.

Source: Louisiana Workforce Commission

Schedule of Events

Sep 11, Post-Secondary Education Cmte
Sep 16, Infrastructure Cmte
Sep 18, Quality of Life Cmte
Sep 18, Board of Directors
Sep 22, Strategic Luncheon
Sep 22, Ribbon Cutting
Sep 25, Business After Ours

Welcome New Members

Clear Channel Interspace Airports
IRBEEZ Bee Farm
Comfort Suites
Kitchen Warehouse
Old South Granite
Red River Glass
Ball's Crane Service
CommCare Corporation
Lil Cajun House

August Ribbon Cuttings

Bulls Gym
Kolder Champagne Slaven & Co
Conference Center at the Greens
United Country Realty

Red Coat Ambassador of the Quarter

Charnia Cheatwood, retired Dean of Students at LSUA, was presented with the Red Coat Ambassador of the Quarter Award for April-June 2008 at the Strategic Luncheon on Aug 20. The award, sponsored by Applebees, is for dedicated support in representing the Chamber to further its mission of economic growth and development.

Chamber Supports Louisiana Scholars

During the past school year, the Chamber began its enthusiastic support of the Louisiana Scholars Program in three Rapides Parish high schools: Glenmora, Northwood, and Buckeye. Rapides, along with only three other parishes, was chosen to implement and test the program's viability, with the eventual statewide implementation as a goal of the state's Dept. of Education. Under the leadership of Roy Martin III, the Chamber's main role in implementing this program is organizing area businessmen/women to make presentations in local high schools, in a classroom setting, to encourage students to take rigorous courses to best prepare them to be immediately successful in either work life or with higher education, while highlighting the career opportunities provided by Cenla employers. Volunteers are needed for the current school year and speaking opportunities require minimum amount of time or preparation, but promise a lifetime of rewards for local students and businesses. If you and/or your business are interested in helping implement Louisiana Scholars, please visit our newsroom at www.cenlachamber.org for the registration form or contact Jay Ellington at the Chamber (318) 442-6671.

by Dr. Tom Armstrong, Education Division Chair

Small Business Person of the Year Nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for the Small Business Person of the Year for 2009. We expect the SBA deadline to be announced soon, so we are asking that you begin organizing the nomination package. For more information please call (318) 442-6671 or visit our newsroom at www.cenlachamber.org.

Membership Renewals: In August, 50 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.