

- For over 20-years the Chamber realized the value of having a four-lane highway between Alexandria and Leesville to help secure the future of Fort Polk. We began pushing the Legislature to see this vision and start funding such a project. Construction began in 1995 and on Dec 16, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development conducted a groundbreaking ceremony to launch the final phase of this project, which costs \$26.8 million. Construction on the final 8.7 miles is expected to begin this Spring and by 2012, the entire 47 miles of Hwy 28 connecting Alexandria to Leesville will be four-laned.
- Last month Senator Landrieu announced the omnibus appropriations bill contains nearly \$500,000 for the rehabilitation and extension of the City of Alexandria rail spur track located in the City of Alexandria Industrial Park, and crossing over the Red River Levee into the Port of Alexandria on the Red River. We requested \$1M for the rail spur project as part of our 2009 Legislative Agenda for Central Louisiana. The project has been a priority for the past two-years of the Chamber, City and Port and was presented to the Louisiana Legislative Delegation during meetings in Washington D.C. The Red River Waterway Commission also provided nearly \$500,000 to the Port for improvements that will assist with lowering shipping costs and help provide intermodal capabilities.
- The Alexandria International Airport is having a record year for the number of passengers flying in and out of the new \$24 million terminal, which opened three years ago. At a time when some smaller airports are losing business, AEX travel continues to grow. Through November the numbers are up by more than 19 percent over last year. The average for January-November in the previous nine years was 236,660 passengers; this year there have been 292,500. AEX and our fixed base operator, Million Air, are jewels in Louisiana and the best in the South. They are tremendous first impressions for prospective industries looking at our area. We encourage you to use these facilities when traveling for business or personal needs.
- The Chamber's 2009 Small Business Person(s) of the Year are Dwight and Jillyn Epperson. In 1999, the Epperson's founded Cajun Lubes, L.C. operating as Jiffy Lube, with five oil change service centers located in the Alexandria area and 36 employees. Today they have 12 locations throughout the State with 90 employees. Their business philosophy is simply to provide high-quality, affordable vehicle maintenance services while providing upward career mobility for their employees. They are great corporate citizens of Central Louisiana and we are pleased to forward their nomination package to the United States Small Business Administration for regional and potential state-level consideration. If chosen they will represent Louisiana at the National level.
- The Chamber continues to work tirelessly to represent and serve our membership as a business advocate which supports the economic vitality of the region. Please view our [2009 Annual Report](#), which outlines the Chamber's accomplishments, found in the newsroom at [www.cenlachamber.org](http://www.cenlachamber.org). Each year the Chamber Board of Directors develops a Plan of Work to guide our goals and objectives. Please take a moment to view our 2010 Plan of Work also found at [www.cenlachamber.org](http://www.cenlachamber.org).
- Congratulations to Barbara Wright of First Federal Bank of Louisiana for being recognized as the Chamber's Red Coat Ambassador of the Year for 2009. On Dec 3, she was presented the award for dedicated support in representing the Chamber to further its mission of economic growth and development. Thanks to the Paragon Casino Resort for being the sponsor of the award.
- Upcoming Events
  - Jan 12 @ 11:00am, Ribbon Cutting, Joe's Cleaning Service, 101 Constitution Blvd, Alexandria
  - Jan 15 @ 3:00pm, Ribbon Cutting, InsureAuto Agency, 2102-E MacArthur Dr, Alexandria
  - Jan 20 @ 10:00am, Ribbon Cutting, Yankee Cajun Po-Boys, 4508-T Coliseum Blvd, Alexandria
  - Jan 22 @ 11:00am, Ribbon Cutting, 1st Franklin Financial, 3800-G Monroe Hwy, Pineville
  - Jan 27 @ 11:00am, Ribbon Cutting, American National Insurance—Doug Jones, 209-A Pecan Park Ave, Alexandria
  - Jan 29 @ 1:00pm, Ribbon Cutting, The Pillbox, 4740 Jackson St Ext, Alexandria
- Welcome to Our New Members
  - 1st Franklin Financial – Sandra Fuller, (318) 640-3221
  - Alexandria Indoor Range – Linda Johnson, (318) 442-4988
  - Sake Sushi Japanese Restaurant – Irene Liang, (318) 487-0288
  - David Pugh Enterprises – David Pugh, (318) 767-3330