

SUMMER 2018

# GATOR GRAM

LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LAKE CHARLES SULPHUR WESTLAKE DEQUINCY VINTON IOWA



## Louisiana High School Athletic Association Means Big Business for Southwest Louisiana

As the Youth Sports Capital of Louisiana, Southwest Louisiana has benefited greatly from youth sports being an economic driver from softball, baseball and basketball to swimming and a myriad of other tournaments. In addition to upcoming summer games, the first and second quarters were successful, with three Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) tournaments being held in March, April and May.

The LHSAA Marsh Madness Boys' Basketball State Championship tournament was held March 5-10 at Burton Coliseum in Lake Charles. The attendance was in excess of 36,000 with an economic impact of \$2,020,000 using 1,575 hotel rooms in Calcasieu Parish.

The Allstate Sugar Bowl LHSAA Softball State Championships was held in Sulphur for the 18th consecutive year at Frasch Park, April 26-28. This three-day event featured the top high school softball teams in seven classes and five divisions from all over Louisiana vying for championship titles. The attendance was 23,442 with an economic impact of \$2,084,100 using 2,616 hotel rooms in Calcasieu Parish.

May 9-12, Sulphur also hosted the Allstate Sugar Bowl LHSAA Baseball State Championships. This four-day event featured the top high school baseball teams from all seven classes and five divisions competing for state championship titles. The attendance was 24,382 with an economic impact of \$1,714,100 using 1,830 hotel rooms in Calcasieu Parish.

"The total economic impact for these three tournaments alone was \$5,818,200. We host multiple events throughout the year with LHSAA as well as USSSA and other national organizations. For these tournaments, we work with our partners at the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, SPAR, Ward 3 Recreation, and the municipalities. The 2018 LHSAA state baseball tournament hosted in Sulphur by the Lake Charles/SWLA CVB set a new attendance record for the event in its current format. Everyone in the hospitality industry pulls together to make hosting these tournaments a success," said Eric Zartler, sales director of the LC/SWLA CVB.

For more information on the economic impact of tourism on Southwest Louisiana, log onto [www.visitlakecharles.org/ImpactOfTourism](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/ImpactOfTourism).

[www.VisitLakeCharles.org](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org) #VisitLakeCharles

/LakeCharlesCVB @lakecharlescvb VisitLakeCharles @visitlakecharles

VISIT  
*LakeCharles*  
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

# LATER GATOR

*A message from our executive director*

As the summer travel season gets into full swing in Southwest Louisiana, it's important to note the impact that tourism has on the economy both on a state and local level. Recently, Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser announced 2017 as the sixth consecutive year of record-breaking tourism numbers in Louisiana. The state welcomed a record 47.1 million visitors in 2017, representing an increase of nearly 500,000 over the 46.7 million visitors reported by DK Shifflet in 2016.

With more people visiting our state, the economic impact increased to \$17.5 billion, or an average of \$371 per person. Tax revenue generated through travel and tourism spending saves each household in Louisiana \$1,047 a year in taxes that would be needed to maintain current services. As for Southwest Louisiana, travel expenditures in Calcasieu Parish totaled \$732 million.

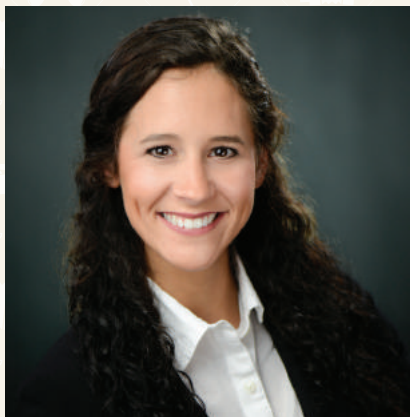
Investing in tourism to promote and market Louisiana leads to thousands of direct and indirect jobs for the state. At the end of 2017, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows 236,300 jobs were the result of visitor spending in Louisiana, meaning 1 out of every 8.5 working adults in Louisiana is employed due to the tourism industry.

Later this summer, the Louisiana Tourism Association (LTA) and the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau (LC/SWLA CVB) will host the Lt. Governor's Travel Summit at Golden Nugget Lake Charles, Aug. 21-23. The LC/SWLA CVB is proud to host this prestigious conference for Louisiana's travel industry. The Louisiana Tourism Association supports the hospitality industry, encouraging members of the industry to join the association to learn about promotional opportunities in addition to leadership and marketing initiatives.

The LC/SWLA CVB encourages everyone to participate and get involved in the Lt. Governor's Travel Summit to learn more about trends in tourism, as well as the industry as a whole. For more information on LTA, visit [www.LTPA.org](http://www.LTPA.org).



Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP  
Executive Director, CEO



## Laikyn Cooper, Promotion

Laikyn Cooper has been promoted to Sales Manager. She will focus on the Louisiana corporate market, as well as other corporate client sales. Laikyn previously held the position of Group Services Coordinator, and we look forward to her many accomplishments in this new position. In the short term, she will continue to assist with group services and will oversee the transition of the position.

## THE BUREAU STAFF

### Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP

*Executive Director, CEO*

### Kyle Edmiston, CDME

*Deputy Director, COO*

### ADMINISTRATION

Shanna Landry

*Director of Administration & Satellite Office*

Heather Savoie

*Accounting/HR Director*

Alecia Acosta

*Finance/Administration Assistant*

Cindy Johnson

*Special Projects/Film Location Manager*

### SALES & SERVICES

Eric Zartler, TMP

*Sales Director*

Tara Johnson

*Sales Manager*

Taylor Beard

*Senior Sales Manager*

Laikyn Cooper

*Sales Manager*

Melanie Stahl

*Group Services Coordinator*

### COMMUNICATIONS

Angie Manning, CDME

*Communications Director*

Colten Miller

*Publications/Systems Manager*

Amos Orr

*Digital Marketing Strategy Manager*

Amanda Reeves

*Public Relations Manager*

Will Precht

*Media Relations Specialist*

### TOURISM

Anne Taber Klenke

*Tourism Director*

### VISITOR INFORMATION

Melissa Trahan

*Tourist Information Manager*

Jamey Kadhim

*Tourist Information Weekend Manager*

Kristen Shiver

*Tourist Information Assistant*

Angela Hammond

*Tourist Information Assistant/Adventure Guide*

Will Nidecker

*Tourist Information Assistant/Adventure Guide*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Samuel V. Wilkinson, Chairman

*Chamber Southwest*

Oliver G. "Rick" Richard, III, Vice Chairman

*Arts & Humanities of Southwest Louisiana*

Evette Gradney, Secretary/Treasurer

*Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association*

Brian Levens

*West Calcasieu Association of Commerce*

Lauren Cooper

*West Calcasieu Community Center Authority*

Edwina Medearis

*City of Lake Charles*

Mark Lavergne

*Southwest Louisiana Festivals*

Rob King

*Southwest Louisiana Restaurant Association*

Nimesh "Nick" Zaver

*City of Sulphur*

Gerry Del Prete

*Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association*

Jonathan Ringo

*Calcasieu Parish Police Jury*

# BUREAU UPDATES

## Media Tours

This spring, the CVB hosted an Eco-tourism and Birding Media Tour for travel writers. Located on two major flyways, Southwest Louisiana is a birding hotspot in the USA with more than 400 species spotted throughout the year. While in town, the writers experienced the Creole Nature Trail and Adventure Point, an eco-tour, gulf beaches and local Cajun cuisine. Additionally, the group also got to tour museums and historic districts.



Jeff Dennis (Lowcountry Outdoors/freelancer) and Will Precht, CVB media relations manager, took part in a fishing excursion led by Big Lake Guide Service.

The bureau also hosted a Louisiana Pirate Festival Media Tour, May 10-13, and showcased several of the festival's events including the inaugural Pirate Festival Costume Ball. While in Southwest Louisiana, writers also enjoyed a tour and tasting at Bayou Rum Distillery, cheered on their favorite quarterhorse while dining at Rosewater Grill at Delta Downs, and learned about our rich pirate history and culture as they toured the Imperial Calcasieu Museum and Charpentier District.



Charles and Julie McCool  
McCoolTravel.com, FuninFairfax.com

## ADDY Awards

The LC/SWLA CVB was honored with several ADDY awards earlier this year for a variety of campaigns that showcased Southwest Louisiana as a colorful and fun place to visit. The bureau garnered ADDY gold and Best of Print for the Galleria Takeover campaign, which highlighted Southwest Louisiana as the South's premier gaming resort destination. Other ADDY awards included a silver ADDY for the Discover Southwest Louisiana commercial and a bronze ADDY for the Interstate 10 Exit 29 campaign, encouraging travelers to stop in Lake Charles as they are traveling eastbound from Texas.

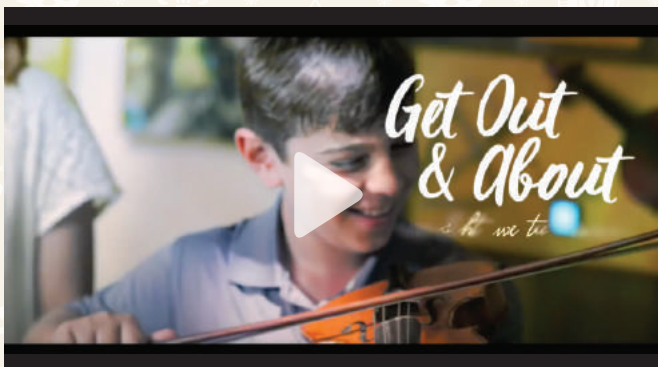
## GOLD & BEST OF PRINT AWARD

*Houston Galleria Takeover*



## SILVER

*Discover Southwest Louisiana Commercial*



## BRONZE

*Interstate 10 Exit 29 Campaign*



## 2018 National Tourism Week Awards Luncheon

Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser visited Lake Charles in May and was the guest speaker at the CVB's annual tourism awards luncheon. He discussed how Calcasieu Parish was booming and that the travel and tourism industry is a tremendous economic driver, bringing \$17.5 billion to the state of Louisiana last year. The CVB honored community partners who made significant contributions to the local tourism industry.



**PARTNER IN TOURISM**  
**Adam Carter**  
*Bayou Rum Visitor Center Manager*



**PARTNER IN TOURISM**  
**Jamison Trouth**  
*Yellowfin Distillery*



**PARTNER IN TOURISM**  
**David Faulk**  
*Mardi Gras Museum*



**PARTNER IN TOURISM**  
**La. Department of Wildlife & Fisheries**  
*Region 5 Lake Charles Office, Eric Shanks*



**SOCIAL MEDIA PHOTO OF THE YEAR**  
**Callie Gordon**



**2018 SALES PARTNER IN TOURISM**  
**Tomas Rey**  
*Rey Royal Excursions*



**2018 YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD**  
**Jiten Zaveri**



**2018 MEDIA PARTNER IN TOURISM**  
**Antoine Aaron**  
*KPLC*



**2018 HOSPITALITY ARTS TOURISM**  
**"HAT" AWARD**  
*Flock of Five Gift & Art Emporium*

# DE GUMBEAUX POT



**2018 GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD**  
John O'Donnell



**2018 LASTING IMPRESSION AWARD**  
Big Daddy's  
Jerry LeBlanc



**2018 PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD**  
Congressman Clay Higgins  
Represented by Jerod Prunty



**RHEA BARNES TRAVEL INDUSTRY AWARD**  
Daniel Ieyoub  
Represented by Mark Ieyoub



**2018 TOURISM LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD**  
Michael K. Dees



**2018 TOURISM LEADERSHIP AWARD**  
Michael Davis  
Golden Nugget



**2018 ORGANIZATION OF THE YEAR**  
Louisiana Winter Beer Fest



**2018 SPORTS PERSON(S) OF THE YEAR**  
Keith Alexander  
LHSAA



**2018 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR**  
Merline Morvant



**2018 CHAIRMAN'S CUP AWARD**  
Mary Jo Bayles (Also pictured: Sam Wilkinson,  
Chairman of CVB Board of Directors)



**2018 SWLA TOURISM PARTNER OF THE YEAR**  
Louisiana Pirate Festival Costume Ball Committee

# GATOR BITES



## National Get Outdoors Day

National Get Outdoors Day is a new, annual event to encourage healthy, active outdoor fun. On June 9, Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point hosted a special event to encourage everyone, especially kids and families, to take advantage of outdoor adventures to have fun and be healthy. Along with the interactive exhibits at Adventure Point, the celebration included baby alligators, displays from Friends of the Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges & Wetlands, photos with Gumbeaux Gator and coloring books. For ideas to get outdoors, go to [AdventurePoint.info](http://AdventurePoint.info).



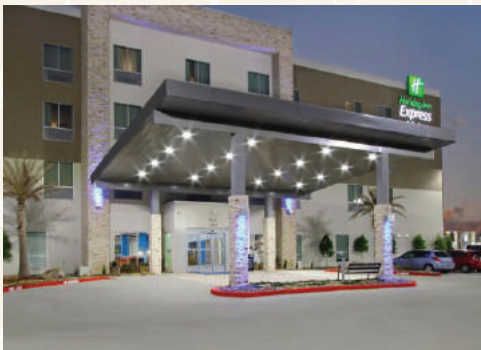
## Baton Rouge Sales Mission – June 21

The sales department is planning a sales and media mission to Baton Rouge, one of the CVB's top markets. The mission will consist of sales calls and one-on-one meetings to share the new openings of attractions, hotels and meeting space in Southwest Louisiana and will help keep the destination top-of-mind. Local partners in tourism are attending the reception and setting up table top displays to promote their property or attraction. The Baton Rouge reception will be Thursday, June 21. We are looking forward to new business opportunities that will be gained from this mission!

## Tourism Infrastructure on the Rise

Visitors to Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana have more selection when deciding where to hang their hat while exploring the area. Several new properties are available in Calcasieu Parish for overnight visitors this year. In Lake Charles, new properties include Holiday Inn Express-Lake Charles South, with 92 rooms; Home2 Suites by Hilton, with 87 rooms; Staybridge Suites, with

106 rooms; and Tru by Hilton, with 98 rooms. New properties outside of Lake Charles include The Mulberry Hotel in Westlake, with 37 rooms and Cobblestone Inn and Suites in Vinton, with 45 rooms. For a complete list of properties in Southwest Louisiana, visit [www.visitlakecharles.org](http://www.visitlakecharles.org).



## L'Auberge Receives AAA Four Diamond Hotel Ranking

L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles and L'Auberge Casino & Hotel Baton Rouge have once again earned the coveted AAA Four Diamond rating, ranking them among the nation's elite hotels with the highest standards of service and world class amenities. Four Diamond hotels account for just 6.1 percent of the more than 27,000 hotels reviewed by AAA. Congratulations for reaching such a high level of hospitality and customer service!



## Southeast Tourism Society Honors 5 Local Events



Every quarter, the Southeast Tourism Society (STS) selects the "Top 20 Events" for the month and highlights the best of the best festivals or events. The Southwest Louisiana honored events for the month of July are Red,

White, Blue and You (July 4), the Cajun Music & Food Festival (July 20-21), Lake Charles Symphony Summer Pops – The Music of James Bond (July 14) and the Marshland Festival (July 27-28). Arts & Crabs Fest (Aug. 18) was also honored, making the list for the month of August. The events are chosen from each of the following eleven STS member states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. As the Festival Capital of Louisiana, we are proud to have such unique and meaningful events in Southwest Louisiana. For more information, go to [www.southeasttourism.org](http://www.southeasttourism.org).

## Lake Charles – Certified Retirement Area

Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, along with the Louisiana Office of Tourism, are proud to announce that eight communities from across Louisiana are officially Louisiana Retirement Certified Areas. The Encore Louisiana Commission worked for over three months on naming these specific locations across the state that are now certified and focused on bringing retirees to enjoy their "encore" at life. Louisiana has unique opportunities and locations perfect for retirees, and Lake Charles is one of eight communities within the state classified as Certified Retirement Community. Other cities include: Lafayette; Natchitoches; Ruston and Lincoln Parish; Toledo Bend and Sabine Parish; Shreveport-Bossier City; Houma and Terrebonne Parish; and Thibodaux. Criteria that was used in selecting the first eight communities included: climate; demographics; tax structure at the state and local levels; local housing availability; public safety and crime index; employment and volunteer opportunities; healthcare and medical services; public transportation; recreational areas; and festival and fairs, just to name a few.



## Vote for your Favorite Local Restaurants!

One of the number one pieces of trivia that visitors want to know when arriving in the area is this: "Where do the locals eat?" The bureau is promoting the Top 20

Favorites restaurant contest now through June 25, and locals can vote on their top 3 picks. At the end of the contest, the Top 20 Favorites will be named. The Top 3 restaurants receive plaques, and most importantly, bragging rights! Vote for your favorite local restaurants at [www.visitlakecharles.org/vote](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/vote).





# LAKE CHARLES SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LAKE CHARLES | SULPHUR | WESTLAKE  
DEQUINCY | VINTON | IOWA

1-800-456-SWLA | [www.VisitLakeCharles.org](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org)  
1205 N. Lakeshore Drive | Lake Charles, LA 70601

## MISSION

To provide leadership in initiating and coordinating the worldwide marketing of Calcasieu Parish as a highly desirable leisure and convention destination; to solicit and service convention and other group-related business; and to engage in visitor promotions which generate overnight stays in Southwest Louisiana.

## VISION

To enhance and develop the economic fabric of the parish.

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Lake Charles, LA  
Permit No. 215

## SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA SPOTLIGHT

### Lt. Governor's Travel Summit

The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau is honored to host the Lieutenant Governor's Travel Summit in Lake Charles August 21-23 at Golden Nugget Lake Charles. Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser will be promoting the new brand: Feed Your Soul.

The Louisiana Travel Association (LTA) has planned one of the largest educational opportunities for tourism professionals from across the state at the Summit. Attendees will hear from the Lieutenant Governor; Louisiana legislators; and the Louisiana Office of Tourism. Breakout sessions will cover topics for sales, marketing, leadership and communications.

"We are honored to have tourism industry leaders in Southwest Louisiana for the Lt. Governor's Tourism Summit," said Shelley Johnson, executive director of the CVB. "The bureau staff has planned familiarization tours of the Creole Nature Trail, the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail and the Charpentier Historic District for statewide tourism ambassadors, as well as international marketing representatives from the Louisiana Office of Tourism. Exposing them to our unique cultural gems will enhance their ability to promote our area to leisure travelers and tour groups all over the world."

To find out more about the conference, go to [www.ltpa.org](http://www.ltpa.org).



# LOUISIANA

Feed Your Soul.