FOCUS

A Monthly Publication of the Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce

Volume 14 | Number 1 | January 2021

FEATURING: 2020 TERREBONNE YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARD

A WORD FROM 2021 CHAIR AND CHAMBER CEO.

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: RISE ABOVE MEDIA
In our current COVID-19 climate it’s time to think differently about employee health. With over 65 trusted years of leading edge healthcare experience, TGMC is here to help you and your employees return to work safely.

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- Testing
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IN THIS ISSUE:
Happy New Year! We’re finally out of 2020 and the Chamber is excited for a new year and new visions! In this issue we will be featuring our 2020 Terrebonne Parish Young Achievers, hearing from incoming 2021 Incoming Chairman Dr. Garcia, and Chamber CEO Nicol Blanchard. We’ll also be tagging in with New Member Rise Above Media and seeing what’s going on with our members in our member news section!
Happy New Year to you and yours. I am honored to be your 2021 Houma-Terrebonne Chamber Chairperson. I am looking forward to 2021 and what the new year might bring.

The Chamber is here to assist businesses and bring together the community. To achieve these goals, the Chamber developed and continues to choose goals that fit into one of four divisions. These divisions in which committees have been created are Government Activities, Economic Development and Infrastructure, Community Development, and Chamber Development. These four divisions are where the board and members will constructively spend time and energy. At our board retreat held in November, we reviewed our goals for 2020 and determined our vision for 2021. Each of these divisions has several short-term goals for the year which will bring us closer to achieving our long-term goals of the future. Each of these Divisions we will set a timeline to ensure their completion.

LaDonna Cruse, Stephanie Hebert Insurance Agency, is the vice-chair of the Chamber Development Division. In addition to our long-term goals, this division has defined our short-term goals to market the Chamber to include promoting the Chamber through social media, website, print publications, etc. Since the Chamber provides great things for its members and community, we want to start more active conversations and bring people together. This division has a subcommittee “Small Business Diversification Task Force.” This subcommittee goal is to diversify the Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce to represent the community it serves. The Chamber will continue to services to meet the needs of our members.

Dr. Kristine Strickland, Fletcher Technical Community College, is the vice-chair of the Community Development Division. In addition to our long-term goals, this division has defined our short-term goals that are divided into two committees: Healthcare and Education. Our short-term goal in Healthcare is to educate people on community resources and build a resource database accessible on the Chamber website. Our long-term goal in Education is to bridge the gap between education and business by supporting Jump Start initiative and working more closely with Terrebonne Parish School Board.

Brett Means, Synergy Bank, is the vice-chair of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Division. In addition to our long-term goals, this division has defined our short-term goals include supporting and monitoring I-49, LA1, North / South Corridor, Houma Navigation Canal Dredging, Parish Projects, and a separate DOTD district for our area. We also will actively support Economic Development, Diversification, and Coastal Protection and Restoration. LA 1 Coalition, Restore or Retreat, Houma Downtown Development Corporation, South Central Industrial Association (SCIA), and Terrebonne Economic Development Authority (TEDA), to name a few, are very important partners in these efforts to comprehensively obtain a more lucrative region.

CJ Casey, Buquet Distributing, is the vice-chair of the Government Activities Division. In addition to our long-term goals, this division has defined our short-term goals include staying informed on Council, Parish, and State projects by monitoring and working with our Parish President, Council, and Legislative delegation, along with keeping abreast of Capital Outlay projects and support Terrebonne Parish Recreation Modernization Task Force recommendations. The Governmental Activities committee is the political arm of the Chamber while the other three committees are products of governmental events that affect our community.

We are always looking for members who want to assist with our committee objectives. We also want to remind everyone that employees of member companies can participate on these committees and attend our many events.

The Chamber will continue to collaborate with the appropriate agencies, commissions, boards, organizations, councils, delegations and individuals on the issues and projects that impact our community. The Chamber board and staff are here to assist members in any way we can.

Over the many years, we have had excellent leadership in the Chamber, and I thank all the past chairpersons for giving of their gifts to bring us to the place we are today. As we move into the New Year let us remember the real mission, “Uniting community and building a stronger Terrebonne - Chamber Connected!”
I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all their efforts throughout the 2020 year. The success of the Chamber is built on the efforts of our members and in this past year, we have overcome many challenges and enjoyed many successes. Thank you for the dedication, loyalty, and commitment that each one of you has shown us.

We have come through a year that was unprecedented with mandates, quarantines, and hurricanes. We continued because we are resilient. We will get through this.

How reassuring it has been to know that we can count on all of you regardless of what faces us. On behalf of Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce, please allow me to extend my personal and genuine appreciation to each and every one you for your valuable contributions to this organization. Working with you this past year has been a pleasure, and we’re proud to have you as a member of the Chamber.

We offer our best wishes and happiness to you and your families as we all look forward to a successful 2021!

“The road of life twists and turns, and no two directions are ever the same. Yet our lessons come from the journey, not the destination.” – Don Williams Jr.

NICOL BLANCHARD
Chamber CEO

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A big congratulations to Hope Christian Academy on your ribbon cutting ceremony! The daycare learning center is located at 1302 Lafayette Street in Houma. Call 985.857.4444 today! —PHOTO BY TRAVION SMITH

Healthy Heart Clinics of America – Houma is located at 435 Corporate Drive, Suite 402, and can help with bettering your health! They celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony and is ready to serve the Houma area! Visit https://healthyheartclinics.com/Houma/index.html or call 985.262.3250 today!

Pictured is Michelle’s Creative Designs at the Chamber Pop Up event with their gorgeous gifts. They can customize anything you may need and has many options to celebrate the holidays! Visit them at 4463 W. Main Street in Gray!

Pictured from left to right: Chamber Chair Chuck Weaver Jr. (South Louisiana Financial Services), State Representative Jerome Zeringue, Chamber CEO Nicol Blanchard, and 2021 incoming Chair Dr. Michael Garcia (South Louisiana Medical Associates) at the November General Membership Luncheon. Special thanks to State Rep. Jerome Zeringue for updating attendees on the recent special sessions!

Congratulations to 4L Mercantile on your ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating your new store-front located at 1795 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd Suite M! Shop at 4L for your apparel and gift needs! Visit their Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/4LMercantile to see their beautiful products!

Special thanks to Finding Our Roots African American Museum for coming out for the November 28th Small Business Saturday Chamber Pop Up! The two artists had beautiful handmade customized dolls and African American art available for purchase. You can visit the museum at 918 Roussel Street in Houma!
This month we sat with new member Rise Above Media owner Heidi Guidry. Heidi was born and raised in Morgan City, Louisiana. She graduated Nicholls State University with a BA in Mass Communications with a concentration in Public Relations and that is when she was introduced to the graphic design world. She started an internship her junior year at the Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce back in 2014 and that is when the vision truly came to life including the name Rise Above. “I fell in love with not only creating captivating designs but telling a story with them. I knew I wanted to own my own business one day. I chose Rise Above, not only because of my main goal is to help others Rise Above their business goals, but because I have risen above so many obstacles in my personal life. I use it as a reminder that anything can be overcome if you just keep moving forward with an open-mind.”

She has also traveled to Sydney, Australia where she studied TV & Media at Hillsong International Leadership College. She says it was those learning experiences where her passion began. Her career began 7 years ago and what a journey it has been since then!

Rise Above Media is a one-stop-shop for graphic design and marketing needs and Heidi strives to help the business community by creating exactly what clients need. Rise Above services includes graphic design, marketing materials (design and print), web design & development, social media management, consulting, copywriting, and more. “What sets Rise Above apart is I like to sit down with my clients to get to know them. What's your passions? Dreams? Goals? Specialties? I put your vision to paper, and I love to help Rise Above your expectations. Let's create EXACTLY what you need, that's within your budget, and will get results.” Heidi says she saw a need in the business community with her involvement with the Chamber and wanted to go beyond her capabilities of her job title. She has taken many avenues to better her skills including her employment with the Chamber and the networking it has provided, her travels abroad allowing experiences with international media, and the variety of industries she's able to work with. “These moments have all allowed me to gain insight and build upon my passions.”

Rise Above clients love the flexibility and transparency of the creating process. She says she wants her clients to leave the creative experience feeling inspired. “I want the design and service to reflect THEM. I am merely the hands to your business.” Her clients love the dedication that is put towards projects. “I do my ALL to get what you need done. Your business is your livelihood. I want to help you thrive.”
Heidi says the most challenging part of what she does is conveying how much marketing and branding is needed for a business. She understands budgets are tight, however, a proper marketing plan and clear branding is a necessity to take a business to the next level. “My favorite part of what I do is to sit with people and see them light up as they talk about their business.” She says a business is more than just the money side of things, “it’s people’s dreams coming to fruition.” She loves taking an idea and image in people’s minds and making them come to life. The initial reveal of a design is her favorite moment. “It’s truly inspiring and it makes me want to work even harder.”

Her vision is to grow her business into a multi-employee business. “It is only me right now, but as things pick up, I want to add on to my team because that adds a dimension that can only be present with different perspectives. I can’t do everything, and with a diverse team, that will only intensify with Rise Above can do.” She says the Chamber can help with that goal simply because the Chamber family is like no other. “We’re all different people that have different passions, yet when we are together, the energy is rich.”

Rise Above Media decided to invest in the Houma Chamber for a simple reason. “I have been involved with the Chamber professionally for over 4 years now. I have seen firsthand how the networking and Chamber family can further a business.” She says that the resources available through the Chamber partners are eye-opening and she would not have known about them if it were not for the connections she has made through the organization. She continuously looks forward to meeting new members because they are her favorite. “They have so much zest and energy; it’s contagious!”

Heidi is planning to separate her time as a Chamber employee and Rise Above Media simply because she believes fully what the Chamber has to offer. “I chose to invest my personal business’ time and money because members within our organization needs more guidance and I truly want to help further what I can help with. That means Rise Above will be involved more on a personal level.” She is excited to bring even more help to our business community and the Chamber is an integral part in that. Welcome to the Chamber!
The Terrebonne Young Achiever Award recognizes young professionals in our community based on their outstanding career achievements, community service impact, and their future goals. Congratulations to the 2020 winner and nominees! Keep going above and beyond! Special thanks to b1BANK. This award would not be possible without you!

Ryan Page was born and raised in Houma Louisiana and is a proud graduate of Vandebilt Catholic High School where he helped bring home the State Championship in men’s soccer his senior year. In addition to his athletic achievement, he accomplished the highest achievement attainable by the Boy Scouts of America program by earning the rank of Eagle Scout which he must have demonstrated Scout Spirit, and ideal attitude based upon the Scout Oath and Law, service, and leadership skills. Ryan’s project was to build a rock-climbing wall at Bayou Cane Fire Department for training purposes. During his final year of scouts in 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit our area, which caused a number of scouts in his troop to become inactive during that time. Despite the obstacles, Ryan was determined to achieve his goal. With the help of a few other Scout members, the project was completed, which allowed Ryan the honor of receiving the rank of Eagle Scout. Only the top 4% of Boy Scouts earn this rank!

After graduation high school, Ryan attended the University of Louisiana at Laffayette where he obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree with a concentration in graphic design. While in college, he became a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity where he eventually served as Chapter President. He also spearheaded several philanthropic events throughout his college career such as organizing a TOMS shoe drop with TOMS founder and Chief Shoe Giver, Blake Mycoskie, along with Robin Roberts of ABC News to help deliver hundreds of pairs of shoes to the New Orleans community after Katrina. He reached out to Blake personally and told him the great need within the community, and the next thing he knew, Blake had replied with saying, “We are coming down South, can you head up this project?” He did so without hesitation.
South, can you head up this project?” He did so without hesitation.

Early into his college career, Ryan met his wife Lauren Landry Page from Lafayette. They recently celebrated their 10-year wedding anniversary. Early in their marriage, they moved to New Orleans, both working in the advertising and marketing industry. Ryan worked his way up from head graphic designer at Naked Pizza. He went on to work at Peter Mayer, the Gulf South’s largest advertising agency as a Senior Studio Designer. They loved their life in New Orleans, but decided to move back home once starting a family.

Ryan left his colorful world of art and design and decided to follow in his father’s footsteps at Page Insurance. This is where Ryan had to tap into his business mindset where he now proudly serves as a part of the 4th generation to carry on the family business. He obtained his insurance license on the first try and has been providing quality service and coverage to the wonderful people of South Louisiana for the past 6 years. He has fully dived into his profession and has been an active member of the Professional Insurance Agents (PIA) and the Young Professionals (YIPS). Ryan has served on the YIPs Board of Directors since 2017. He quickly moved through the chairs and will fulfill his next duty as President for 2021.

Ryan has actively been involved with volunteering his time. His nominator said “As the director of this association, I have been able to witness first-hand how successful Ryan is with everything he signs up for, which is a rare quality in most of today’s volunteers. Few actually follow-through when it comes to implementation.” Ryan has been actively involved in growing the organization’s membership, soliciting sponsor partners, and coordinating different events, including the annual conference. More recently, he has helped orchestrate two community events for the residents of Southwest Louisiana after the devastation of Hurricane Laura. Because of Ryan’s ability to help partner up with resources, they were able to serve over 3,400 plates of hot food and provide supplies to those in need. Instead of doing a smaller food drive, Ryan took the lead and reached out to connect the dots with other groups to join forces for one BIG successful event. “He truly is a team player and understands the value of teamwork.”

Ryan continues to give back to the community in his spare time by participating as an active Board Member of the Coastal Conservation Association’s Bayou Chapter, a Board Member of the Terrebonne Parish Recreation District 2/3 and is part of Leadership Terrebonne’s 2020 class where he has further developed his skills in leadership, public service, and volunteerism. When he’s not volunteering, he enjoys spending time with his wife and their two girls; Landry (6) and Lillian (4). He says his favorite thing about Terrebonne Parish is the unique location that provides for an abundance of coastal fishing as well as a diverse culture of food, family, and friends.

Ryan has been described as encouraging due to the fact he has accomplished several outstanding career achievements, serving his community, encouraging others to come together to get involved, and implementing positive change in our community. At only 33 years old, Ryan has accomplished various milestones and continues to strive towards his future goals. Congratulations, Ryan!

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**2020 Terrebonne Young Achiever Nominees**

**Britnie Massey** is the Human Resources Generalist for Fletcher Technical Community College. She is a Central Lafourche High School graduate, has earned a Bachelor of Sciences with a concentration in Family and Child Services from University of Phoenix, and has an MBA with a concentration in Human Resources Management from LSU. Britnie is described as able to do her job at an exemplary level and demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to her college community as well as to the general public. “She is helpful, caring, resourceful, and happy to offer service no matter the task.” Britnie began her career at Fletcher as a temporary Adminis-
Britnie Gorten, administrative assistant for the Finance & Administration division and was quickly promoted to her current position in less than a year! Her community involvement is just as impressive. She’s always willing to pitch in for the good of the community regardless of the mission. She is a court-appointed special advocate for CASA and followed her case through to adoption. She taught with VIPKid helping Chinese children learn English while in grad school. She also manages her own health and wellness groups to empower women and men in the community! “Britnie has made a difference at our college, exemplified the mission of the college, and has positively impacted the people of our state. Her skill, knowledge, willingness to help others, and dedication to our college and the community make her our 2020 Terrebonne Young Achievers Award nominee.” Congratulations, Britnie!

Sherry & Cherry Wilmore, Everybody’s Favorite Twins

Everybody’s Favorite Twins, Sherry and Cherry Wilmore, are known for their incredible story and passion for the community. Cherry is an Ellender Memorial graduate while Sherry graduated from South Terrebonne. They have a BA in Government with a minor in Criminal Justice. They have done remarkable work within our community, and their natural affinity to connect with others have propelled their volunteerism and positive impacts even further. They work with the local foster care system, in which they have provided all Region-3 Class of 2020 High School graduates with laptops and jumpstart packages to begin their new journeys. They are a voice in our community by advocating for the under-served, providing cultural awareness, and bridging community gaps, along with ensuring that even the smallest voice has been heard. They are actively serving on the Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government subcommittees for the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force: Law and Judicial and Communication. They are active Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce members and serve on multiple committees. They are familiar faces in our communities, assisting others with personal development and goal achievements, and have been extremely instrumental in voter engagement, mobilization, and education in the community. “The twins are so much more than what you read on paper - they are truly gifted in the area of connectedness and will no doubt make a lasting impression with those they touch and connect with.” Congratulations! We are so very proud of Sherry and Cherry!

Sherman Naquin, b1BANK

Congratulations to Sherman Naquin of b1BANK for your nomination for the 2020 Terrebonne Young Achiever’s Award! Sherman is a South Terrebonne graduate who has earned his Masters of Business Administration from Nicholls State University. He is the Banking Center Manager at the East Houma location and has proven his love for our community by being a local football and t-ball coach, a member of The Rotary of Houma, helping local organizations and events such as TFAE, Relay for Life, cooking benefits, and most recently assisted victims of Hurricane Laura in Lake Charles. He’s a 2020 graduate of Terrebonne Parish. “His most important accomplishment was being crowned the 2019 Chamber of Commerce Cornhole Champion.” The 2019 Cornhole Champion is described as a team leader, an encouragement to others to help local youth, and he “has the motivation to get the job done.” Great job, Sherman! Continue to not only push your career accomplishments forward, but also your heart for our community!
This month we would like to introduce you to Alyssia Hay. She has been a CASA volunteer for approximately eight months. She is still working her very first case and doing very well. She has been happily married to Steve Crispino for four years. She has two biological children, Carter Hay (25) and Carlie Hay (19). She also has two bonus children, Kevin Crispino (28) and Kyle Crispino (23). They also have a sweet little cavipoo named Teddy. Alyssia is a licensed medical massage therapist and has spent the majority of the last 22 years working at Donahue and Trahan Physical Therapy. Not only does Alyssia hold a massage license, she is also a certified yoga instructor and has a degree in Dietetics. When not working, Alyssia spends her down time with her family. She enjoys yoga, reading, hiking, riding bikes, fishing and kayaking. She likes to be outdoors and active. Alyssia is not a native to Houma. She was born in Morgan City but she and her family moved to Houma when she was 8 years old for a better job opportunity and has been here ever since. Something that many people do not know about Alyssia is that her family of origin hosted many foreign exchange students throughout her life. She traveled to Europe to visit these students in Denmark, Germany, France, Spain and Italy.

Alyssia first heard of CASA due to having an office in the same building. Upon researching the CASA, she discovered that this would be a great organization to become involved with. However, as many people do, she put off submitting her application because of self-doubt. “Not enough time”, “Can’t handle it”; “Not the ‘right’ person”. She finally decided to go through with the process after the passing of her dear friend, Gabrielle Hernandez, who was a CASA volunteer. It was her way of honoring Gabby’s legacy.

When asked what advice she would give to people contemplating becoming a CASA she said: “Don’t let fear stop you. Will you become attached to these beautiful kids? Yes, you will. That’s the point. They need people who will be there for them, to always think of what is best for them, to love them. Don’t let the fear stop you from being there for a child in need. You could be the one person, the one constant, the one reliable adult in that child’s life that could be the reason they go on to become happy, healthy, successful, loving adults.”

Just like Alyssia, you can be the voice of a child in foster care. For more details, contact CASA of Terrebonne at 985-876-0250 or visit our website at www.casaofterrebonne.org.

Meet a CASA: Alyssia Hay

From left: Jennifer Bonvillain, Lisa Bustamante, Sherry Mahaney, Heather Falls, Kari Griffin, Colleen Greer, and Tammy Brouillette.

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Dr. Ebony McKinnies, Neurologist, to the Medical Staff

Thibodaux Regional Health System is pleased to announce the addition of Dr. Ebony McKinnies, Neurologist, to the active medical staff. Dr. McKinnies is available to care for patients at Thibodaux Regional Neurology Clinic located 726 North Acadia Road, Suite 2300, Thibodaux, (985) 493-3090.

Dr. McKinnies received her undergraduate degree from Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. She earned her medical degree from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans where she also performed her Neurology Residency and Internal Medicine Internship. Additionally, Dr. McKinnies completed a Fellowship in Clinical Neurophysiology at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans.

She is a member of the American Academy of Neurology, the American Clinical Neurophysiology Society and the National Medical Association.

Dr. McKinnies specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of a variety of neurological conditions such as stroke, epilepsy, migraine, other headache disorders, neuropathy, Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease.

As a Louisiana native, Dr. McKinnies says she was adamant about remaining in the state and bringing her neurological expertise to a great hospital like Thibodaux Regional and a region in need of more neurological services.

Danos Has Award-Winning Year

Danos is the recipient of the 2020 Workforce Innovator of the Year Award by the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI). According to the organization, the award honors organizations “that have provided substantial innovations or contributions to workforce development in Louisiana. The award recognizes those who have excelled in creating, implementing or supporting a high-caliber education and/or workforce development initiative.”

“Danos is honored to receive this recognition by LABI,” said Owner Paul Danos. “Danos has always been intentional about creating a culture that supports overall business goals and objectives. Part of that is focusing on process improvement by embracing technology to advance worker training and competency,” said Danos.

This year Danos also received the 2020 Culture of Safety award from the National Ocean Industries Association (NOIA). According to NOIA, Danos was recognized for “establishing an institutional safety culture through behavior-based safety programs and innovations like virtual reality to enhance worker training and augmented reality to improve work processes.”

The award came following the company’s best total recordable incident rate (TRIR) of 0.11, while logging a record 8.9 million-man hours in 2019, a 35% increase over the previous high of 6.6 million-man hours.

“We have been developing our safety program and culture for 73 years. While our company has grown, and our service offerings have evolved, one thing that has remained constant is putting people and their safety first. Our safety team is second to none, but every Danos employee plays a role in contributing to our safety culture daily,” said Danos.

Danos received further safety leadership recognition this year, as it was named one of three finalists for the Center for Offshore Safety’s 2020 Safety Leadership Award. In addition, for the fifth time Danos was named one of the LSU100, Louisiana State University’s annual list of the 100 fastest-growing LSU graduate-led businesses. The company also received recognition on LSU’s, ROARING10 list, which recognizes the ten highest revenue generating LSU graduate-owned or LSU graduate-led businesses.

CIS Thibodaux Clinic Renovation Brings More Services and Convenience to Patients

Cardiovascular Institute of the South (CIS) has completed a renovation and expansion of its Thibodaux clinic at 1320 Martin Luther King Drive to include more space, bringing new services and convenience to patients.

The clinic now utilizes a portion of the second floor for patient appointments, with an addition of a vein clinic, second elevator, and new parking lot. There are 11 new exam rooms, for a total of 31. A fourth treadmill room and an eighth ultrasound room have also been added.

CIS began in 1983 in Houma, Louisiana as a one-man practice under Dr. Craig Walker. The Thibodaux location opened in July of 1986 and moved to its current location in 2000. In 2006, an initial renovation was completed. CIS has grown to be a world-leader in cardiovascular care with 20 locations throughout Louisiana and Mississippi and more than 60 physicians. CIS offers cardiovascular care for the heart as well as the entire body, including diagnosis and treatment of coronary, carotid, valve, peripheral and venous disease as well as heart arrhythmias.

“The expansion and growth of the Thibodaux clinic over the decades is a true testimony of the trust our community puts in our care,” said Dr. Bart Denys, who joined CIS in 1994. “We are now able to accommodate our patients in a more comfortable setting with more room and privacy. Keeping quality care local is at the heart of our mission, and I’m honored to serve this community.”

“From a humble beginning on Canal Street in the 1990s with just four patient exam rooms, we have seen a steady and continuous growth,” said Dr. Sandeep A. Patel, CIS cardiologist since 1995. “With patient care at the center of our efforts, this renovation will serve patients better with 31 total exam rooms. The future looks bright with a team approach to patient care.” To learn more about CIS or to schedule an appointment, visit www.cardio.com or call 985-446-2021.
Fletcher Students Participate in Queen Bess Island Restoration Project

Seven students from Fletcher Technical Community College recently participated in a restoration project on Queen Bess Island, along with instructors Jacqueline Richard and John Myers. They worked on the island alongside the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program; the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (they restored the island through dredged materials); and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The event was the first major volunteer effort of Restore or Retreat.

“One of the hallmarks of community colleges is their participation in the local community where they reside,” said Fletcher Chancellor Dr. Kristine Strickland. “The faculty and students who participated in the Queen Bess island restoration demonstrate Fletcher’s continued commitment to our community and most especially to the restoration of our coastline. I appreciate the time, energy and effort the students and faculty put in to this project. I would also like to thank Restore or Retreat for the opportunity and to thank them for their organization of this service project and their continued partnership with Fletcher.”

The group spent two days planting approximately 6,800 black mangroves and matrimony vine. The black mangroves will help stabilize the soil after the restoration efforts, and brown pelicans prefer to nest there. Matrimony vine produces the wolfberry fruit, and was planted as a food source for birds on the island. According to Jacqueline Richard, Associate Professor of Geology, Department Head of Science, and Assistant Director of the Fletcher Institute of Coastal Studies, plants help stabilize the ground because their roots hold the sediment in place, and slow down erosion. She pointed out that these plants were chosen with the pelicans in mind as well.

After coming near to eradication, both by industrial expansion, and from the effects of DDT on the pelicans’ eggs, Queen Bess Island has become an important nesting site for the brown pelican, along with many other birds. Admittance to the island is allowed to anyone who can arrive by boat, except during the months of February through September, as that is when the brown pelicans are nesting.

Fletcher students who participated in the planting are: Ignacia Brown; Stephanie Plaisance; Keymiya Williams; Hannah Lapeyrouse; Preston Perez; Pearl Sanchez; and Alexis Pradat.

Students, faculty, staff, and community members interested in planting events this winter should contact Jacqueline Richard at Jacqueline.richard@fletcher.edu, or 985-240-9526.

Local Nonprofit Donates to Nicholls State University Shaver Gym Renovations

The Lorio Foundation donated over $175,000 to renovate space on the Nicholls State University campus for more socially distanced classrooms. The Thibodaux-based nonprofit donated $177,000 for a new heating and ventilation system in Shaver Gym. Named for former Nicholls student Richard Shaver, the gym has undergone a transformation this year to hold classes and St. Thomas Aquinas Mass during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the summers, Shaver Gym is also used by Colonel Campers.

“This is a historic building on the Nicholls State University campus, and we believe this donation will benefit the university as they work toward their mission,” said Cam Morvant, chairman of the Lorio Foundation. “We are always looking for ways to help make Nicholls a better educational institution for the students.”

For 23 years, the nonprofit named for former Thibodaux letter carrier Lloyd Lorio has donated more than $3 million to improve facilities on the Nicholls campus. Projects they have contributed to include the resurfacing of tennis courts, renovating the steps at the Donald Bollinger Student Union, buying a new playground at Little Colonel’s Academy and building a pavilion at Ayo Pool.

Submit Your Articles to Focus for Member News

Our Member News section of the Focus is a great way for Chamber members to promote your event or project, and to announce special awards or certifications. Word Document articles of 250 words or less may be submitted to info@houmachamber.com by the 1st of each month for publication in the following month’s newsletter, space permitting.
Terrebonne General Medical Center (TGMC) is proud to announce the completion of expanded cardiology services that includes a state-of-the-art Electrophysiology (EP) Surgical Suite and four Cardiac Catheterization Labs (Cath Lab). With this expansion, TGMC is the only facility in the region to offer this level of advanced and expanded cardiology services to treat complex and highly specialized cardiology procedures.

The leading edge EP Surgical Suite was built to accommodate the growing patient volume and is equipped with the world’s first high definition detector, the Alphenix Core + and Alphenix Hi-Def Detector from Canon Medical Systems USA. Electrophysiology is the study of the heart’s electrical system which is used to diagnose irregular heartbeats or arrhythmia. These procedures, done in partnership with Cardiovascular Institute of the South (CIS), such as cardiac ablations, treat heart rhythm disorders often reducing the need for medications. These procedures are less invasive and performed in an outpatient setting, leading to quicker recoveries and better outcomes for patients. With this addition, TGMC is now the only facility in the region offering a dedicated EP Surgical Suite with advanced cardiac electrophysiology to treat patients with an irregular heartbeat.

The EP expansion allows for TGMC and CIS’ Structural Heart Program to continue to expand to meet the growing needs of the community. The Structural Heart Program provides minimally invasive procedures to treat life-threatening valve disorders and structural heart defects. Through collaboration between CIS’ interventional cardiologists and TGMC’s cardiovascular surgeons, the team provides leading edge cardiology solutions to insure patients have the best possible outcomes. Conditions treated include Mitral Valve Stenosis, Congestive Heart Failure and Aortic Stenosis. Treatment options include Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR), Balloon Valvuloplasty and Percutaneous Mitral Valve Clip Placement.

With the additional cardiac Cath Lab, TGMC now offers four state-of-the-art rooms. Each lab is equipped with the latest technology, including the Alphenix Dual Plane for unmatched flexibility and patient safety by Canon Medical Systems USA, Inc.

This innovative technology provides physicians and medical personnel with superior imaging allowing clinicians to see fine details during complex interventional procedures such as stent positioning, wire and catheter navigation through the stent, and observation of stent deployment. As patient safety is always a top priority, the new technology offers a full suite of dose optimizing tools to help minimize radiation exposure to patients, physicians, nurses and technologists.

“TGMC is committed to providing a high level of cardiac care to our community,” said Phyllis Peoples, TGMC President and CEO. “With the additional space and innovative technology, our patients can be assured that they do not need to travel far for exceptional cardiac care.”

On average, TGMC provides over 3,250 cardiac procedures annually. TGMC also is ranked #1 in the market and top 10% in the nation, region and state for cardiac care by CareChex by Quantros, an honor achieved through the efforts by TGMC and CIS.

To learn more about cardiology services, visit TGMC.com.

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Only Hospital in South Louisiana to Earn 5 Stars for Highest Quality Care

A five-star quality rating from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is the highest possible score awarded. With less than 9% of hospitals in the nation earning 5 stars, we were one of only three in the state of Louisiana to achieve this distinction. This rating, based on quality clinical care such as having the lowest hospital infection rates, best survival rates and providing patients timely and effective care, is proof you can have confidence in the high quality of care you and your family will receive.

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