

WINTER 2018

# GATOR GRAM

LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LAKE CHARLES SULPHUR WESTLAKE DEQUINCY VINTON IOWA



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## PORT WONDER: \$20+ MILLION LAKEFRONT PROJECT PROPOSAL ANNOUNCED - WELCOME NEIGHBOR!



The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) is proud to partner with the City of Lake Charles, the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and other private and public entities on the proposed Port Wonder attraction, to be located right alongside the shore of Lake Charles. The \$20+ million lakefront project will be a perfect addition to entice visitors off of I-10 and explore the many options that Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana has to offer.

The proposed venture will include site improvements, renovation of the parking garage and the construction of an iconic structure that will house the Children's Museum of Lake Charles and potentially the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Science Center and Educational Complex. Pending final approval, the collaboration of these two entities will consolidate two unique projects under one roof for an educational, entertaining and delightful visitor experience.

"Bringing this imaginative, new attraction to the forefront of the destination at one of the key entry points to Lake Charles proper will greatly enhance the lakefront and opportunities for visitors to enjoy spending time in the area, with the added benefit of an educational component when it comes to the sustainability of our unique lands, estuaries and waterways that are home to nature's bounty of plants and animals," said Shelley Johnson, executive director of the CVB.

The City of Lake Charles and the Children's Museum of Lake Charles have successfully solicited other funding partners, both governmental and private, and partners project Port Wonder to be fully funded contingent upon final TIG approval.

For more information on Port Wonder and other attractions in the area, go to [www.VisitLakeCharles.org/PortWonder](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org/PortWonder).

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VISIT  
*LakeCharles*  
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA



*A message from our executive director*

The CVB recently received news that the bureau earned recertification status from Destinations International through its Destination Marketing Accreditation Program. The program is globally recognized, serving as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management. Since the program's inception, the standards have become more rigorous, and the bureau has been certified for a total of 8 years. Currently, there are 218 certified destination marketing organizations worldwide and 8 in Louisiana, including the Louisiana Office of Tourism.

With 2019 quickly approaching, the staff at the bureau is wrapping up 2018 programming and looking straight ahead to future endeavors. Image is everything, and that is definitely true with destination marketing. Visitors want to see what they would be experiencing in a destination. Knowing this, the bureau is partnering with Threshold 360, an imaging company that specializes in capturing everything that is visitor-friendly in a destination including restaurants, shops, attractions, accommodations and meeting space. This will greatly enhance the bureau's online presence, the ability to create virtual itineraries and more impactful blogs to attract visitors.

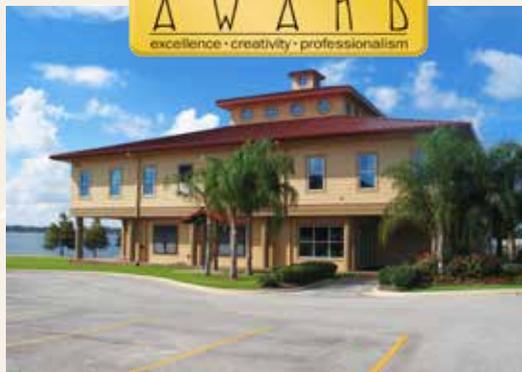
Another new program for 2019 will be the meeting incentive program to entice planners to choose Lake Charles, especially during shoulder seasons. With all things being equal regarding destinations being able to host a convention or group, the meeting incentive program will give Lake Charles an edge in being attractive to planners. The sales department is working with the communications department to launch a campaign and provide information to meeting planners to educate them on our services.

The staff at the bureau is looking forward to working with community partners to make 2019 a banner year.

Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP  
Executive Director

## ConventionSouth Award

The CVB has been honored with *ConventionSouth's* Annual 2018 Readers' Choice Award! Out of the 2,000+ nominations, the bureau is among 320 CVBs, meeting facilities and hotels located across the South to receive this year's Readers' Choice Award. Throughout the year, meeting professionals nominate the meeting sites they believe provide exemplary service for group events. The nominated sites are then compiled onto an online ballot where meeting professionals and fans are asked to vote for the best of the best. Since creation in 2001, this is the third time that the CVB has received the award. The bureau will be featured as an award recipient in the December 2018 Awards Issue of *ConventionSouth* magazine.



## 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*

Taylor Beard Stanley

*Senior Sales Manager*

Tara Johnson

*Sales Manager*

Laikyn Cooper

*Sales Manager*

Jamey Kadhim

*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 Manager*

### TOURISM

Anne Taber Klenke

*Tourism Director*

### VISITOR INFORMATION

Melissa Trahan

*Tourist Information Manager*

Kristen Shiver

*Tourist Information Weekend Manager*

Melanie Stahl

*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*

Jonathan Ringo

*Calcasieu Parish Police Jury*

Alan Trantina

*Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association*

# PRESS ROOM

## Louisiana Culinary Trails Recap



October 8-9, Louisiana Culinary Trails partners joined the Louisiana Travel Association and *Garden & Gun Magazine* in Nashville, Tennessee for a Louisiana-themed media reception and restaurant night.



Eleven chefs from Louisiana destinations showcased local flavors to a crowd of 100 local Nashville media/influencers, plus editors and guests of *Garden & Gun*.

The following evening, Louisiana chefs prepared culinary creations in the kitchens of eleven of Nashville's hottest restaurants for the "Louisiana x Nashville Restaurant Night." Representing the Seafood Sensation Trail, the CVB worked with **Chef Lyle Broussard** of L'Auberge and **Chef Kevin Thompson** of Golden Nugget to take over two restaurants in the Nashville area, Fin & Pearl and The Southern.

In addition to the Louisiana Culinary Trails, the LC/SWLA CVB works with local restaurants to host culinary writers and tour groups as well as promote the Top 20 Local Favorites restaurant contest. Check out [www.VisitLakeCharles.org/SeafoodSensation](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org/SeafoodSensation) to view video interviews with Chef Lyle and Chef Kevin.



## Travel Media Showcase

Earlier this fall, Will Precht, Media Relations Manager, attended Travel Media Showcase. This annual tradeshow offers unique opportunities for top travel journalists and travel industry professionals to meet one-on-one, for the purpose of exchanging information and pitching story ideas for future editorial coverage of destinations.

Journalists in attendance included editors, staff and freelance travel writers, magazine and newspaper travel writers, broadcast travel journalists, as well as Internet travel journalists and bloggers. The three-day program included more than 25 scheduled journalist/exhibitor appointment sessions and networking opportunities.

## Culinary Media Fam



CVB Public Relations team members, Amanda Reeves and Will Precht, showcased Lake Charles to eight culinary-focused travel writers and bloggers from all over the United States, Oct. 25-28.

While in Southwest Louisiana, the media group was able to experience our unique culture through an array of culinary offerings and demonstrations, and by attending local events and festivals. They were also treated to Cajun and Creole cuisine while dining at several of the area's top restaurants.

## Golf Media Hits the Links



The CVB recently hosted a familiarization tour for a group of nine golf journalists from across the country, as well as one Canadian journalist. The group stayed at L'Auberge Casino Resort, toured Lake Charles' golf courses, sampled Cajun cuisine at area restaurants, and made stops along the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail. The tour included opportunities for the travel writers not only to experience the incredible golf courses in Southwest Louisiana, but also to enjoy the rich Cajun culture and hospitality that Lake Charles has to offer.

## American Journal Fam



Writer and photographer team Anna and Sascha Rettig with *America Journal* toured Southwest Louisiana over the Thanksgiving holiday to write an article on our destination. A bimonthly special interest magazine published in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, *America Journal* provides inspiration for its 38,000 readers who are interested in travel to North America. Anna and Sascha also write about craft beer culture for the 30,000 readers of *Craft Magazine*.

Southwest Louisiana showed off its foodie culture in multiple forms including boudin (thanks to The Sausage Link for the “how it’s made”); po-boys, fresh seafood and gumbo. This gastronomic feast was complemented by tours of the Charpentier Historic District and the Mardi Gras Museum of Imperial Calcasieu, as well as local arts & shopping at Flock of Five Art & Gift Emporium. Along the Lake Charles’ Craft Brews and Spirits Trail, the group quenched their thirst at Crying Eagle Brewing and Bayou Rum.

On Thanksgiving Day, Anna and Sascha toured the one-of-a-kind Creole Nature Trail All-American Road. With the colder weather, Snow Geese and white-fronted Geese were flying overhead and flocking in the fields along the trail. And at Pintail Wildlife Drive, the sound of the geese provided a great soundtrack!

## TravelSouth Brazil Media Fam

Lake Charles played host to Brazilian journalist, Claudia Tonaco, as part of a Travel South USA tour. While in Southwest Louisiana, Claudia was introduced to a handful of our diverse cultural offerings, which she will share with her Brazilian audience. Claudia was treated to Cajun and Creole cuisine, enjoyed alligator-spotting on the Creole Nature Trail, learned about our rich history by touring the Charpentier district, and experienced a Mardi Gras celebration at the Mardi Gras Museum.

## World Travel Market International Travel is on the Rise



Anne Klenke, tourism director at the CVB, recently traveled to London to meet with tour operators who can or do send business to the Lake Charles area, as the United Kingdom is consistently ranked in the top five international destinations visiting Southwest Louisiana. In addition to meeting with numerous tour operators from the UK and Ireland through one-on-one appointments during World Travel Market this November, Anne combined the trip with training at Travel Counsellors Ltd.

Travel Counsellors, Ltd., is an independent travel company headquartered in Manchester, England, specializing in tailored holidays and business travel. The company has over 1,800 travel agents globally, running their own home-based franchises, in seven countries including the United Kingdom, Ireland, The Netherlands, Belgium, South Africa, Australia and the United Arab Emirates.

At Travel Counsellors, Anne recorded an exclusive TCTV on the official channel for Travel Counsellors’ agents to learn about destinations and products. Anne’s broadcast focused on how and why people should visit Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana. As part of a cooperative program purchased with Travel Counsellors Ltd, Anne conducted a live webinar training of over 1,070 travel agents who work for Travel Counsellors in addition to the area receiving media exposure through advertising, social media and other promotional programming.

Looking ahead, the U.S. Commerce Department predicts that travel to the USA from the UK will continue to increase in 2019 along with arrivals from other European countries including France, Germany and Italy. The bureau works to ensure that Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana remains strong in attracting international visitation including leveraging partnerships with Brand USA, the U.S. Travel Association, the Louisiana Office of Tourism and many others.

# AROUND TOWN



## Golden Nugget Lake Charles: AAA Four Diamond Resort

Golden Nugget Lake Charles has earned the prestigious AAA Four Diamond rating, ranking them among the nation's elite hotels with the highest standards of service and world class amenities. Just 6 percent of nearly 28,000 hotels inspected and approved by AAA achieve this distinction. Congratulations for reaching such a high level of hospitality and customer service!

## Destiny Award National Finalist



The bureau produced the popular "Lake Charles Local: Meet the Locals" video series, launching in the spring of 2018 that also landed the campaign in to the top 3 finalists for a national U.S. Travel Association Destiny award. Other finalists included Travel Portland (winner) and Reno Tahoe. The City of Lake Charles reached out to the bureau to create a partnership to produce 4 more videos as a team. The new videos are currently underway, being filmed through the end of the year. See the videos at [www.VisitLakeCharles.org/meetlocals](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org/meetlocals).

## Sam Houston Jones State Park Updates



Sam Houston Jones State Park is getting some upgrades. Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser announced several possible projects at the park, and is asking for the public's input. A new fishing pier and boardwalk was proposed, as well as a new covered pavilion, and a splash pad. Due to the desire for public input, timelines for those proposed projects have not been set. One project that is starting soon will be cabins and restrooms within the park. \$2.4 million has been allocated to build new cabins and restrooms and renovate existing ones as well. To give your input to the Lieutenant Governor, go to [www.crt.state.la.us](http://www.crt.state.la.us).

## Upgrades to Ward 3 Fields



Over the course of this year, the bureau spearheaded an initiative with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, the City of Lake Charles and Ward 3 Recreation to launch an Artificial Turf Installation Project, covering the infield playing areas on 9 fields in Lake Charles, 4 at OD Johnson and 5 at the Power Center. The project broke ground in October of 2018 with the expectation of playing baseball and softball on the fields in the spring of 2019. This project showcases the investment that can be made when community agencies and partners work together with an end-goal in mind.

## Louisiana Spotlight in American Way

*American Way*, the inflight magazine for American Airlines, recently featured Louisiana in its supplement spotlight piece. The insert showcased what makes Louisiana a great place to live, work, play and invest. There was a focus on the global impact that the state has on the rest of the world, as well as the beauty and visitor-friendly experiences that the state has to offer. The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB participated with a full-page ad, supplying photos and interviews. There was an additional mention of the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road in the two-page spread provided by the Louisiana Office of Tourism.



## Holiday Contests

The CVB's annual Gingerbread House Contest winners have been announced!

This year, entries highlighted themes such as Wreck it Ralph, Cajun Christmas, and Holly Beach. The Best of Show award went to Pastry Chef Joseph Agustin with Golden Nugget. The entry featured a holiday-themed model of the Calcasieu Parish Courthouse featuring Christmas trees on the front lawn, garland-wrapped columns, and the courthouse's signature copper dome.

The gingerbread houses will remain on display at the bureau throughout the month of December. Residents and tourists visiting the Welcome Center may vote on the "People's Choice Award." The winners will be announced Wednesday, Dec. 26, at 10 a.m. at the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The 2nd Annual Mini Christmas Tree Decorating Contest will be held at the Brimstone Museum Complex on Saturday, Dec. 8. Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point and the CVB partner with the Brimstone Museum Complex and the City of Sulphur to host this competition. The decorated tree themes include Louisiana culture, Louisiana history, seafood, music, Cajun, Creole and festivals. The trees will remain on display through Dec. 26.

## Website Refresh

The CVB has maintained a comprehensive website for the past five years that is viewed more than one million times a year by potential visitors and locals alike as a resource for area activities, accommodations, dining suggestions, and calendar of events. With time comes changes in technology, and in anticipation of the future, the current site is undergoing a complete redesign. This redesign is aimed at making information more easily accessible over multiple devices with an emphasis on the mobile user experience. In addition, we are updating the look and feel to complement the progress that is occurring in our region. The site launch reveal will occur in early 2019.



### Welcome to Lake Charles, Southwest Louisiana

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### Social

#visitlakecharles



The bureau was named as Arts Patron of the Year at the Mayor's Arts Awards. Kyle Edmiston, chief operating officer for the bureau, represented the organization and accepted the award presented by Mayor Nic Hunter of Lake Charles.

## CVB Honored as Arts Patron of the Year

The bureau supports the arts through promotions, media and public relations and grants. The CVB provides tourism/arts partnership grants, tourism development grants and tourism economic development grants, designed to boost events, community projects and visitation. Several events benefited from the tourism development grant, which is in addition to the tourism/arts partnership grants administered by the Arts Council. These grants benefited Chuck Fest, Smoke & Barrel, Boudin Wars, Mardi Gras and the Louisiana Pirate Festival.



## L'Auberge Casino Resort: USA TODAY's Reader's Choice Award

The United States is home to upwards of 1,500 casinos—more than any other country on the planet. From coast to coast, gamers have a huge range of options for where to place their bets, and not just in Las Vegas. L'Auberge Casino Resort Lake Charles was recently ranked 5th of all U.S. casinos as chosen in *USA Today's* competitive 10 Best Reader's Choice travel awards contest. The casino resort is being honored for the third time in four years as one of the best casinos in the country and the highest ranked in Louisiana. USA Today 10 Best teamed up with a panel of experts with extensive knowledge of the travel and gaming industry to nominate 20 casinos as the best in the USA, and the final winners were determined by popular vote.



# LAKE CHARLES

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LAKE CHARLES | SULPHUR | WESTLAKE  
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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.

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Permit No. 215

## SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA SPOTLIGHT



## COMING SOON: Panorama Music House

Opening in early 2019, the Panorama Music House will usher in a new era for music lovers with a strong nod to the past and Lake Charles' traditions. Actually, The Panorama Music House sign itself is repurposed from The Panorama Steak House and The Panorama Burger House hailing from decades ago, and it's one of the last porcelain signs in Lake Charles.

The Panorama Music House will have music at its heart, with the venue able to accommodate sophisticated band set-ups and traveling acts, in addition to local bands. The décor will have a retro, Vegas-style approach with bright colors, lava lamps and tributes to famous musicians. The venue will serve "upscale pub grub" and Louisiana beers.

"We are very excited to become a part of the thriving downtown business scene. We hope to build on Southwest Louisiana history and tradition to offer a complete guest experience featuring quality live music," said Jay Ecker, owner and local musician.

Another nod to Lake Charles' past is the incorporation of Goldband Records, a popular recording studio best known for its Cajun and R&B recordings in the 1950s and 1960s, that was once located in Lake Charles. The venue will house a collection of memorabilia from Goldband Records on behalf of the Southwest Louisiana Music Museum. The Panorama Music House will offer membership to the Gold Band Club which will include VIP access to live music events.

All in all, the venue will add to the vibrant culture of downtown Lake Charles, bringing with it local flavor and a side order of history!