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VOLUME 85 | NUMBER 4

THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2021

PORT ALLEN, LOUISIANA

Population surge continues in WBR

STAFF REPORT
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The West Baton Rouge Parish population surge that began in the late 1990s now stands out among the biggest in Louisiana, according to the 2020 U.S. Census.

The WBR increase of 3,411 residents – a 14.3 percent gain – was the third highest rate of population growth in the state, according to figures the United States Census Bureau released last week.

“Back in 2000, we were 11th in the state and 2010 we were 8th in the state, so I saw this coming,” Parish President Riley “Pee” Wee Berthelot said. “I figured we could be in the top 5, but I didn’t think it would be No. 3.”

Much of the growth came from what is now the “City” of Addis, where the population swelled from 3,593 in 2010 to 7,805 in the 2020 Census.

It’s not the first population spike for Addis. The city existed as a village until 1980, when the population nearly doubled from 724 in 1970 to 1,320 a decade later, a drop of 15.97% from the 2010 population of 5,180.

The population spike now gives Addis the largest population of the three municipalities in West Baton Rouge.

Port Allen’s population dropped to 4,353, down from the 5,180 in 2010, which reflects a 15.97%

drop over the last decade.

Now, Addis ranks as the most populated city along the La. 1 Westbank corridor from Ascension to Pointe Coupee parishes, eclipsing the populations of Donaldsonville, Plaquemine and New Roads.

Brusly’s population of 2,377 was a decrease of 8.19 percent from the 2010 tally of 2,589.

The census also showed a population of 2,180 in the unincorporated community of Erwinville.

The close proximity to Baton Rouge has fueled WBR’s growth, along with another factor, Berthelot said.

“We have a very good public school system, which has attracted a lot of people to this area,” he said. “Plus, the traffic is so cumbersome trying to go across the river and back, so that a lot of people who have jobs at Shintech and Dow are locating to our area because it’s much easier travel.”

“We have some people running from the 2016 flood or the crime in East Baton Rouge,” Berthelot said. “I can’t say that never happens here, but it’s nothing like all the shootings we’ve seen in Baton Rouge.”

The La. 415 extension to La. 1, along with the rebuilding of the Intracoastal Waterway twin span and the work on the Mississippi River Bridge could further boost the population, he said.

Shots ring out in front of local store

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Two people were shot Sunday during an argument outside of a Port Allen supermarket.

Shots rang out around 4:30 p.m. in the parking lot of Hubbens Supermarket, according to Port Allen Police.

The argument began inside the store and spilled out into the parking lot, where the shots rang out.

Another person became involved in the argument

before the shots were fired.

The suspect pulled out a gun, but the victim fired several times in self-defense.

Two people were shot, but neither sustained life-threatening injuries.

Yolanda Gaines was arrested on two counts of aggravated assault with a fire arm, while Kimberly Williams was arrested and charged with obstruction of justice.

The cause of the altercation is still under investigation.

Clementine Hunter’s World on LPB

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Clementine Hunter – self-taught artist and Louisiana icon. She painted thousands of images recalling her life on a 20th century plantation. This visual diary of her life in Melrose, Louisiana, shed new light

on the often untold stories of the African Americans workers. This fascinating Louisiana produced documentary combines vintage photographs with the work of the artist herself to bring Clementine’s story to life. Encore: Saturday, August 28 at 8:00 PM.

Cash incentive program targets colleges students for vaccination

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BATON ROUGE —Gov. John Bel Edwards and the Louisiana Department of Health announced “Shot For 100,” a new vaccine incentive program that will give \$100 to the first 75,000 college students who get their COVID-19 vaccine at participating institutions of

higher education. 18-29-year-olds are one of the two least vaccinated age groups in Louisiana, and are reporting the most cases statewide.

“With the spread of the highly transmissible Delta variant and its devastating impact on our communities including younger populations, we are seeing more young people go sleeves

up. And that’s good. More than anything, students want an in-person college experience. But to do that safely, we need more shots in arms,” said Gov. Edwards. “It’s in everyone’s interest that our young people get the COVID vaccine - to protect themselves, their families and friends, and their larger communities.”

“COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to surge statewide, and that includes young people. Louisianans are getting it, they are feeling the urgency as you can see in our increasing vaccination rate,” said Dr. Joseph Kanter, State Health Officer. “We hope this fun vaccine perk nudges

See Targets on Page 2

Global Learning Fellowship Winner

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Brusly High School teacher Kristi Gregoire was selected with only 48 other educators in the nation for the 2021-2022 Global Learning Fellowship through the NEA Foundation. Gregoire has been in education for 13 years. Since 2019, her classes include mostly seniors and focus on Business English and Entrepreneurship.

The Fellowship will be ongoing throughout 2022 and include webinars with all 49 of the program’s educators. In July 2022, all will travel to South Africa to collaborate with teachers there and create lesson plans to institute the importance of Global Citizenship. Together, they will also co-write a book on the subject.

When the seasoned educator was asked how this program will help her students Gregoire replied, “To help our student think not only of being a citizen of Brusly, Louisiana or the



Brusly High School teacher Kristi Gregoire

United States; but to consider themselves a global citizen.”

She also feels now is the perfect time to focus on global citizenship, “Especially during COVID it’s important to have them [students] think on that level because we are all fighting one enemy right now. COVID knows no boundaries.”

The NEA Foundation gives preference to educators who have taught for more than 5 years and who have traveled outside of the United States.

Mrs. Gregoire examines ethics and social responsibility with her students, studying supply chains and company policies. Instead of students considering if they want a product, discussions lead them to examine if they want to support the business with their dollar. Sometimes child labor for some parts of production are revealed to classes, other times, company’s initiatives to recycle or be more environmentally conscious arise.

Public speaking support, resume and cover letter writing are also taught in her classroom. These real world skills coupled with job shadowing in nearby plants, hospitals and other businesses help prepare students for success.

Gregoire has travelled alone outside of the country. Her destination to Cancun included a struggle with her reservation at a rental car company. When she arrived, the language barrier between her and the attendant was impossible to bridge until a bilingual

American stepped in. “You understand and appreciate diversity when you are outside of your own comfort zone,” Gregoire said.

However, when she traveled to Havana, Cuba in 2017, she was shocked by the lives of people she interacted with. Her driver told her he used to be a doctor, but that he made more money driving his cab. In private homes, indoor washing machines and dryers were a luxury. Now, she’s read about the Cuban food shortage affecting people there.

Gregoire concluded, “Those experiences give me a greater appreciation for our life here [in America].”

Not only is this a great achievement and opportunity to bring more focus to global citizenship to the classroom, but it is the second time a Brusly High School teacher has earned a spot. Mrs. Kimberly Eckert had been previously selected for this honor in 2018-2019.

Florida Street Blowhards kick off fall concert season at WBR Museum

After breaking for the summer, the West Baton Rouge Museum’s “Historical Happy Hour” is back with an August 20 performance by the Florida Street Blowhards.

The show is from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and will be performed on the museum’s “Juke Joint’s” side porch stage. The event is free and open to the public.

“We’re thrilled to have the Blowhards kick off our fall season,” said Amanda Moak, the museum’s director of visitor services. “The Florida Street Blowhards have been performing outdoor front yard concerts for the last year in the Baton Rouge area. They’ll be in West Baton Rouge’s back yard on Friday night.”

Sam Irwin, trumpeter and leader of the FSB said many of the important originators of early jazz were from the small river towns.

“Joe “King” Oliver was



from Abend. Pops Foster, the great bass player, was from the McCall, other side of Donaldsonville, “Papa Celestin was from Frogmore near Napoleonville,” Irwin said. “There were also a lot of great musicians who didn’t achieve fame but were well known around here. Guitarist Toots Johnson was from Baton Rouge, and you see his name constantly in the 1920s newspapers. He even won a battle of the bands against “Papa” Celestine’s New Orleans

band. That’s why we play trad jazz: we are honoring the musical tradition set by these great early players.”

Irwin noted that Johnson was so beloved and respected by the White and Black public that his 1928 obituary was published in many south Louisiana newspapers when Black people were not readily acknowledged by name in the media.

“The Baton Rouge police chief said Toots was a generous contributor to charity and always willing to per-

form at charitable events,” Irwin said. “That’s what’s so fascinating about discovering this early music, it’s so old it’s new.”

Band members for the Friday show will be Irwin on cornet, David Seymour, woodwinds; Ben Herrick, trombone; Dahveed Randall, banjo/guitar; Philip Vincent, bass; Gary Stewart, tuba; and Nick Blanchard, drums.

Since the event is outdoors, bring your blankets and folding chairs for seating on the museum grounds. The Juke Joint’s porch stage is located on 6th Street side of the museum.

The West Baton Rouge Museum is located at 845 N. Jefferson Avenue in Port Allen. For more information, call (225)-336-2422 x200 or visit www.westbatonrougemuseum.org or facebook/TheWBRM. The band’s website is www.FloridaStreetBlowhards.com.

News

Blood donations needed as surge worsens

Page 2

Lifestyles

WBR Chamber changes schedules due to COVID

Page 3

Sports

Pels, Panthers prep for scrimmages

Page 14

INSIDE

News.....1-2
 Events3

Lifestyles.....3 - 5
 Opinion.....6

Obituaries.....7
 Bids, Notices.....8

Legals.....9 - 11
 Classifieds.....12

Fun Page.....13
 Sports.....14