

# The Plaquemines GAZETTE

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BELLE CHASSE, LA

50 CENTS

## Special guests leave Empire Rodeo with buckets of fish

By Jason Browne  
reporter@plaqueminesgazette.com

The 65th Annual Empire South Pass Tarpon Rodeo, held Aug. 3-5 at the Delta Marina, was a resounding success.

District 8 Plaquemines Council member Jeff Edgecombe said he was impressed by the size of the crowd, the weather was great, and state rep. Chris Leopold even found his way from Grand Isle to Empire by boat to open the rodeo. Both the number of participating fishermen and the crowd of friends and family there to enjoy the event was larger than last year.

But the longest-lasting impression probably wasn't made on the anglers who took home cash prizes. It was on five families, taken out on six boats to forget their problems for a few hours.

Dose of the Coast, a non-profit that provides coastal activities for individuals with life-altering illnesses, partnered with the Empire fishing rodeo and six volunteer charter captains to take five families out on the water to relax Aug. 2.

Ashley Ferguson, the founder of Dose of the Coast, knows first-hand how impactful a day of sun and fishing can be to someone fighting a terminal illness. Years ago, when her father was struggling with liver cancer, she asked Mark Trahan, a charter captain friend from Empire, to take her father, an avid fisherman his whole

life, out on the water. She said her father thanked her for that trip until he passed away a year-and-a-half ago.

"After he passed, it hit me that I really want to help people. And it really came full circle at this event, because it's the same place I took dad out for the last time," said Ferguson.

Dose of the Coast is coming up on its one-year anniversary in September, so it's still a small operation. Ferguson said she would have been happy with one boat volunteering its services at the Empire Rodeo. Instead she got six, which worked out perfect since one of the five patients referred from Mary Bird Perkins - Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center in Baton Rouge had too many kids to fit on one boat.

Ferguson said lodgings and accommodations for all the families were paid for, and sponsors even chipped in complimentary ice chests for the families to take their catches home. And every boat was fortunate enough to haul in some fresh fish.

"They caught an unbelievable amount of fish. Everyone came back ecstatic," said Ferguson. "Some people held up a whole wagon of their fish for their pictures."

"I've never been thanked so much after an event by participants. Some of them were teary-eyed. Some said they never would have had the funds to go on a trip. And I was blown away by the generosity of Delta Marina and everyone in Empire. They



Ava Lorio and her mother Melissa Lorio, show off a catch Aug. 3, prior to the Empire South Pass and Tarpon Rodeo. Ava's father and Melissa's husband, John Lorio, who is receiving treatment at Our Lady of the Lake Cancer Center, was offered the chance to take his family on a free fishing charter thanks to the non-profit Dose of the Coast, which provides coastal activities for individuals with life altering illnesses. The Empire South Pass and Tarpon Rodeo partnered with Dose of the Coast to take five families on the water prior to the Aug. 4-6 competition.

went above and beyond. It exceeded all my expectations."

Edgecombe said the good time had by the Dose of the Coast participants was one of the best parts of an all-around good experience at

the Empire Rodeo.

"Overall, it was awesome. The event is growing again, and I want to thank the Plaquemines Parish Sheriff's Office and the Plaquemines Parish Government for all their help," said Edgecombe.

## Cormier requests council questions a week in advance

By Jason Browne  
reporter@plaqueminesgazette.com

Plaquemines Parish president Amos Cormier III is tired of asking council members to replenish the parish's workforce, so he wants to make it harder for them to ask him anything.

On Aug. 14, Cormier sent out an email to council members that read in total: *In light of this council's refusal to restore Plaquemines Parish Government to previous manpower levels and provide for full-time directors, the administration is adopting the policy of other parishes, that is: All council meeting councilmember questions for the administration shall be in writing and submitted to the administration at least one week in advance of the council meeting.*

Cormier and his directors, Michael Jiles (Public Service) and Stanley Wallace (Operations), have sometimes struggled to provide answers to impromptu questions asked by council members in open meetings. Sometimes the lack of a prepared answer is solved with a simple "I'll get back to you," and other times results in a full-blown argument. But the prospect of shutting down spontaneous questions altogether is one the majority of the council is not willing to consider.

"To me, that's nothing but smoke and mirrors and him (Cormier) not being prepared to answer tough questions," said District 6 council member Charlie Burt. "I will continue asking questions, and if he chooses not to answer, then he chooses not to. But he's got to answer to the residents, which is the reason I ask questions."

District 2 council member Beau Black echoed Burt's sentiments that council members ask questions because the people have a right to those answers.

"I don't ask the administration questions to trick them or put them in a bad spot. I ask because I want answers for my constituency," said Black.

District 9 council member Nicole Williams said follow-up questions regularly pop up in the course of discussions, from both council members and public attendees, which can't be anticipated and submitted a week prior.

"The council meeting is a forum, so is he going to ask the public to submit questions? Another council member or someone from the audience may have another perspective and ask a question," said Williams. "I'm not going to comply with it."

Other council members point out that the parish charter gives Cormier the right to participate in council meetings, but does not require him to attend.

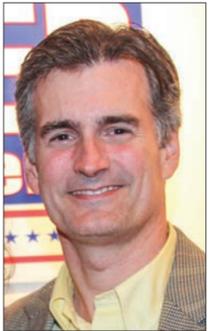
"He doesn't have the authority to make rules for the council meeting," said District 5 council member Benny Roussele. "If that's the way he wants to operate, we can probably take the president's address off the agenda."

"At one time we had a president that didn't show up for meetings, and we made due," said District 8 council member Jeff Edgecombe, referencing former president Billy Nungesser. "When Billy was there and didn't want to fix a ferry ramp, we found a way to do the paperwork ourselves."

District 3 council member Kirk Lepine strongly disagrees with Cormier's personal policy, but plans to test the process. On Aug. 15 he submitted a request to Cormier's office for information on the various contracts parish administration has entered into via the powers granted by Plaquemines' continuing, official state of emergency.

"I wanted to afford him that opportunity and see if he has any information," said Lepine. "He mentioned this is done in other parishes. I've never heard of anything like this before."

Council employees for St. Bernard and Jefferson Parish-



## State of the Drainage Dept. An update from Plaq. Parish Government

The function of the Drainage Department is to operate and maintain the drainage pumping stations tasked with removing storm water from within the levee system. Drainage pumping stations have been a popular topic in the metro area and we would like to inform our citizens of the PPG Drainage Department's pumping ca-



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## Youth group's Civil Rights tour coincides with Charlottesville protests

By Jason Browne  
reporter@plaqueminesgazette.com

On Aug. 12, as anti-fascist protesters were clashing with white supremacists in Charlottesville, Va., a group of young adults from Zion Travelers Baptist Church in Phoenix were in Montgomery, AL, learning about the history of the Civil Rights Movement.

Considering the scope of the violence in Charlottesville, the death of a counter protester killed by a white supremacist, and the deaths of two Virginia state troopers in a helicopter accident while working the protest, the coincidence certainly doesn't qualify as luck. But it was a significant irony, all the same.

"It was kind of like divine intervention," said Darilyn Demolle-Turner, one of the adult leaders of the Zion Travelers Cooperative Center and the District 1 board member for the Plaquemines Parish School Board.

The group had spent the previous night in Alabama and were on their way to visit the Rosa Parks Museum, Dexter Av-



Pictured is Rev. Tyrone Edwards (back) and the Zion Travelers Cooperative Center Youth Leadership group, of Downtown Phoenix on the Eastbank if Plaquemines Parish, standing in front of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church (Martin Luther King's first church).

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IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE, AUG. 29,  
OF THE PLAQUEMINES GAZETTE!