

GATOR GRAM

Visit Lake Charles



VISIT LAKE CHARLES SWEEPS STATE TOURISM AWARDS!

Visit Lake Charles set the bar high in 2019. Read below to see how Visit Lake Charles is impacting the Southwest Louisiana community.



Kyle Edmiston, President/CEO
Pictured with Jill Kidder & Lt. Gov. Nungesser

The Louisiana Travel Association (LTA) presented 19 “Louey Awards” during its Annual Meeting, in Charenton, La., January 29-30 to honor and showcase individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to the Louisiana tourism industry, and Visit Lake Charles (VLC) accepted the award for the 2019 Outstanding Convention and Visitors Bureau of the Year. Additionally, Visit Lake Charles was awarded the 2019 Major Event of the Year for hosting USA Boxing, and Taylor Stanley, sr. sales manager, was awarded Rising Star of the Year.

Championships (three-year agreement), PGA Korn Ferry Tour Lake Charles Championship (five-year agreement), USA Boxing National Championships and Olympic Trails for Boxing, and New Balance Future Stars Series (NBFSS) National Championships (four-year agreement). In addition, VLC secured the first international conference in Southwest Louisiana’s history, the 18th CWC World LNG & Gas Series: Americas Summit & Exhibition, to be held in November of 2020.



Eric Zartler, Sales Director

“Visit Lake Charles set the bar high in 2019 and elevated Louisiana onto the world stage with the 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials in Boxing—not to mention—hosting and securing an impressive amount other national and international events for Southwest Louisiana. We have so much to be proud of in this great state, and it’s always rewarding to see our culture, food, music and natural outdoor offerings through the eyes of visitors who are experiencing Louisiana for the first time. Hats off to Visit Lake Charles for the tremendous impact that these events have on the state from both an economic standpoint and a public relations perspective,” said Jill Kidder, President/CEO of LTA.

“Over the past year, the team at Visit Lake Charles broke records by securing an incredible amount of business along with taking the creativity of marketing Southwest Louisiana to new heights with the rollout of the ‘Louisiana’s Playground’ brand. These successes are largely due to passionate tourism professionals at Visit Lake Charles working alongside strong partners and tourism advocates across the hospitality industry in Southwest Louisiana and beyond,” said Kyle Edmiston, President/CEO of Visit Lake Charles. “We are humbled by this recognition as destination marketing organizations across the state do exceptional work, making vast contributions to the tourism industry in Louisiana.”



Rep. Stephen Dwight

In 2019, four national sporting events were announced including Pro Watercross National

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The work of building relationships and garnering business from state, national, and international groups in 2019 will fully come to fruition in the destination this year. Visit Lake Charles is

honored to host the PGA Korn Ferry Tour Lake Charles Championship, five LHSAA state championships including girls' basketball for the first time in several years, Pro Watercross National Championship, and the New Balance Future Stars Series National Championships, a premier showcase baseball event.

In addition, the CVB was able to secure the first international conference in the history of Southwest Louisiana, the World LNG & Gas Americas Summit in November, and the return of the Louisiana Lt. Governor's Travel Summit to Lake Charles in August, which will allow Southwest Louisiana to showcase "Louisiana's Playground" to tourism industry professionals across the state and region.

An emphasis for 2020 across all departments will be further establishing the new brand to fully promote the juxtaposition and blend of contrasts that comprise Southwest Louisiana.

Ultimately, the brand description, position and voice will work in tandem through advertising, social media, print and marketing materials to communicate "Louisiana's Playground" and the entire Southwest Louisiana area as a desirable place to visit, meet and explore for meeting planners, event organizers, media professionals, and leisure travelers.

Throughout 2020, the staff at the CVB will engage with community partners, agencies and business owners to ensure that the groups, events and individuals hosted during the year are inspired to see the best that Southwest Louisiana has to offer. The culture and people of our destination enjoy a richness of spirit that is truly remarkable to those visiting the area. Our staff is motivated to bring powerful results and a robust economic impact from tourism to Southwest Louisiana this year and beyond.

Please use social media to highlight the culture, culinary, visuals and fun that you experience while in SWLA: #VisitLakeCharles, #LouisianasPlayground, #EatLakeCharles, #YouthSportsCapitalofLA, #getDOWNtownLC, #FishSWLA.

Kyle Edmiston, CDME | President/CEO

THE STAFF

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President/CEO

ADMINISTRATION

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Cindy Johnson
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Sales Director

Taylor Beard Stanley
Senior Sales Manager

Tara Johnson
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Emilee Hoenes
Sales Coordinator - Sports

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Colten Miller
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Digital Marketing Strategy Manager

Will Precht
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Kaitlyn Gallegos
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Kristen Shiver
Tourist Information Weekend Manager

Melanie Stahl
Tourist Information Assistant

Will Nidecker
Adventure Point Guide/Project Manager

Angela Hammond
Tourist Information Assistant/Adventure Guide

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City of Sulphur

Alan Trantina
Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association

Kane Mitchell
West Calcasieu Association of Commerce

W. Brent Lumpkin
Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association



COLTEN MILLER - LEADERSHIP SWLA CLASS OF 2020

Colten Miller, publications/systems manager at Visit Lake Charles, has been selected to join the Leadership Southwest Louisiana Class of 2020. The program was created by the Chamber SWLA and the SWLA Alliance Foundation to develop leaders for the future who have a clear understanding of the region and are committed to its

advancement. Monthly experienced-based training sessions will be held and conducted by recognized leaders whose decisions affect the region in areas such as economic development, business, workforce development, human services, education, government, coastal restoration, and infrastructure.



MARDI GRAS MEDIA TOUR

Visit Lake Charles hosted a Mardi Gras media tour, February 22-26, to showcase the state's second-largest Mardi Gras complete with king cake, Zydeco dance lessons and family-friendly events. Travel media from across the United States and Canada toured the Mardi Gras Museum, tested their bead tossing skills aboard a float in the Children's Parade, and even went behind the scenes at the Royal Gala prior to cheering on the krewes in full regalia. While visiting our area, they also experienced unique Cajun and Creole cuisine, participated in the Iowa Chicken Run and watched the Krewe of Krewes Parade as it rolled through downtown Lake Charles.



The media tour was also joined by the content creation team from Brand USA who was gathering video content of the Southwest Louisiana Mardi Gras experience to be featured in the United Stories by Beautiful Destinations campaign. The campaign travels the country with a mobile content creation lab capturing warm and welcoming stories told from local perspectives to welcome travelers from around the world.

Additionally, an Australian tour operator, Intrepid Group, had 11 clients in the area during Mardi Gras, and they also rode on the Visit Lake Charles float during the Merchants' Parade!



MICKEY SMITH, JR. - GRAMMY WINNER MUSIC EDUCATOR AWARD



Mickey Smith, Jr. is the 2020 Grammy Music Educator Award recipient. This award is presented annually by the Recording Academy and the Grammy Museum to recognize educators who have made a lasting contribution to the field of music education.

Mickey was the 2008 Teacher of the Year for West Orange Cove CISD in Texas and has been nominated for the award by the Calcasieu Parish School Board. He is also president of MusicMakers2U, a local non-profit that provides donated instruments to deserving youth in the Lake Area.

Mickey was recognized during the broadcast of the 62nd Grammy Awards Show on CBS. More than 3,300 music teachers from across all 50 U.S. States were nominated and narrowed to 10 finalists for this year's award. Congratulations, Mickey!

COVER STORY - CONTINUED...

This past October, VLC revealed a new brand for the destination, highlighting the intriguing juxtaposition with the tagline "Louisiana's Playground." Miles Partnership, a strategic marketing company focused exclusively on travel and tourism, conducted an extensive research study to determine the brand essence of Southwest Louisiana. VLC also partnered with the City of Lake Charles on several initiatives including the successful branding of downtown Lake Charles with the #GetDownTownLC campaign and the www.GetDownTownLC.com microsite, as well as funding the new Interstate 10 attraction of Port Wonder. The Lake Charles area will also host the 2020 Lt. Governor's Travel Summit this August.

Taylor Stanley, Rising Star of the Year, began her career at Visit Lake Charles in October 2016 as a Sales Manager. After being promoted to Senior Sales Manager in March 2018, she aligned her vision on how Visit Lake Charles could provide added value and educational opportunities to hotel partners. Taylor recently developed and launched the Destination SWLA Program to educate hotel partners' front-line and management on the role of Visit Lake Charles and how to strengthen our relationship and create a better experience for visitors. Additionally, she has developed several other programs such as the Partner Shadowing Program for the VLC sales department, the Meeting Planner Incentive Program to increase association and corporate meetings, and the Softball Housing Program to coordinate the lodging of 95 softball teams.

"Throughout her time at Visit Lake Charles, Taylor has consistently shown professionalism, leadership and has taken on a substantial amount of responsibility in a short time. She has proven her commitment

to the advancement of Visit Lake Charles by garnering valuable relationships with our partners, coupled with innovative product development," said Eric Zartler, Sales Director at Visit Lake Charles. "I am proud to have a Rising Star like Taylor on our team, and I am looking forward to what she accomplishes in the future."

Additionally, **Chef Dave Evans** of Luna Bar & Grill was the winner of the 2019 Restaurateur of the Year. "Lake Charles is fortunate to have Chef Dave Evans, his passion for our community, and his undeniable talent as a chef and restaurateur. From Chuck Fest to the jazz brunches at Luna Bar and Grill and the many musicians he has helped along the way, Chef Dave has been one of the main proponents for the arts and humanities movement in Southwest Louisiana," said Kyle Edmiston, President/CEO of Visit Lake Charles.

Colten Miller, publications/systems manager, and **Will Precht**, sr. media relations manager, were also presented as Louisiana Tourism Leadership Academy (LTLA) graduates. In addition, **Kaitlyn Gallegos**, sales manager – tourism, **Emilee Hoenes**, sales coordinator, and **Kathryn Shea Duncan**, media/public relations manager, have been admitted into the 2020 LTLA class and will complete the program in 2021.

The goal of the LTLA program is to further educate those within the tourism industry by developing their leadership skills, strengthening their communication networks and informing them about the responsibilities of leadership in building and enriching their tourism-related organizations.

Jill Kidder, LTA President/CEO, and Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser presented awards and recognition at the LTA Annual Meeting to tourism professionals across the state.



Taylor Beard Stanley, Rising Star Award



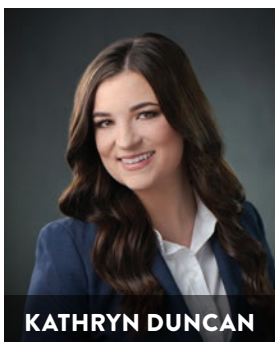
Chef Dave Evans, LA Restaurateur of the Year



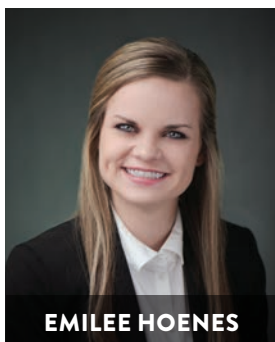
Colten Miller, LTLA Graduate



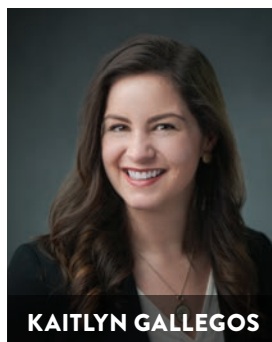
Will Precht, LTLA Graduate



KATHRYN DUNCAN

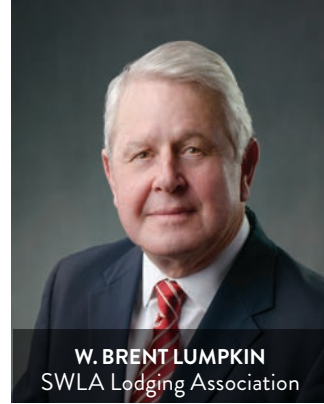
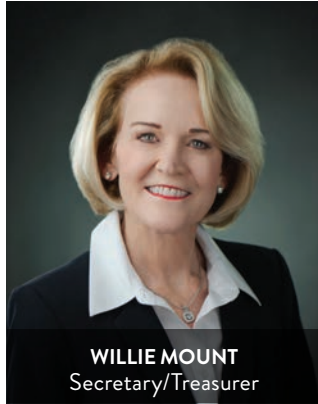


EMILEE HOENES



KAITLYN GALLEGOS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



The CVB is governed by an 11-member board of directors, and 2020 brings with it a new slate of officers for the executive committee. Oliver G. "Rick" Richard III, representing the Arts & Humanities of Southwest Louisiana, is the chair of the board with Jonathan Ringo, appointed by the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, serving as the vice-chair, and Willie Mount, representing Chamber Southwest, is the secretary/treasurer.

Additionally, W. Brent Lumpkin, representing the Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association, was recently selected to serve on the board of directors for Visit Lake Charles.

Lumpkin is a highly involved leader in community development and was appointed to serve on the I-10 Bridge Task Force to study the aging bridge along with avenues of funding to replace the bridge. He also serves on committees at both McNeese State University and SOWELA Technical Community College in planning for both institutions' future growth. Lumpkin serves on the Calcasieu Parish Industrial Development Board where he currently presides as president. He has also served on the Salvation Army Board and the Southwest Louisiana Community Foundation Board. Lumpkin's leadership, with its focus on improving Southwest Louisiana's quality of life, led to the upcoming Contraband Bayou Bridge, to include dedicated pedestrian

and bike lanes, which is the first bridge in Southwest Louisiana to incorporate these amenities. He also served on the Strategic Planning Committee of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF).

"With Brent's extensive background in business leadership, civic organizations and brick-and-mortar community development projects, myself and staff at the CVB are eager to work with him during this time of prolific economic growth in Southwest Louisiana with additional attractions and businesses coming to fruition along with new conventions and events that are packing the calendar in 2020," said Kyle Edmiston, president and CEO of Visit Lake Charles.

LAKE CHARLES TO HOST 2020 USA BOXING NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

USA Boxing recently announced that the 2020 USA Boxing National Championships will return to Lake Charles Dec. 6-12.

"We are thrilled to welcome USA Boxing back to Lake Charles in 2020. Their return is a testament to our unmatched hospitality," said Lake Charles Mayor Nic Hunter. "Last year's event was wildly successful and was truly something to put Lake Charles on the map for national and international sports. We look forward to once again playing host to these athletes, their families and coaches. We commend the tremendous efforts of the Visit Lake Charles team who tirelessly works to market Louisiana's Playground to the world." The 2020 USA Boxing National Championships will be the first steppingstone for boxers that have their

sights on the 2024 Olympic Games Paris. Boxers in the elite, youth and junior divisions will look to earn a place on USA Boxing's High-Performance teams for 2021, which will give them the opportunity to attend training camps at the United States Olympic & Paralympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Co. Boxers competing in all other divisions will be boxing for a national title, as well as USA Boxing national ranking points.

"The entire hospitality community along with boxing fans across Southwest Louisiana joined together to support USA Boxing this past December, and it is an honor for Lake Charles to be named as the host city for the 2020 USA Boxing National Championships," stated Eric Zartler, Sales Director of Visit Lake Charles.

"Preparing for an event like this is only possible with strong partnerships that we have in Calcasieu Parish from municipalities, governmental agencies, partners in tourism, media professionals, dedicated volunteers and the enthusiastic sports fanbase in Southwest Louisiana. We are all looking forward to showing USA Boxing athletes our unique brand of Southern Hospitality – with a Cajun/Creole twist!"



SPRING ATHLETIC EVENTS



The athletic market gives a tremendous boost to the economy of Southwest Louisiana every year. Spring and summer are packed with fans in the stands, cheering on the teams who are all vying for victory. It's an exciting and rewarding experience for everyone involved, and the Visit Lake Charles staff works diligently with the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) and the local facility managers, staff, hotel partners, volunteers and civic leaders to make each event a success.

The LHSAA Girls' Marsh Madness Basketball State Championship returned to Burton Complex March 3-7, followed by the Boys' Marsh Madness State Championship March 10-14. The staff at Burton and the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury help to make this event incredibly memorable for the teams and

fans. In addition to assisting during the tournament, there are also volunteers who are team hosts, being a local point of contact for the teams, assisting them with their needs. Fans pour in from across the state to witness this event, and it's rewarding for everyone involved.

Moving into May, the LHSAA Softball State Championship Tournament will be held May 1-2 at Frasch Park in Sulphur, followed by the LHSAA Baseball State Championship Tournament from May 14-16 at McMurry Park, also in Sulphur. Local businesses, especially restaurants and hotels, always do a tremendous job with welcoming teams with their marquee signs and specials, making visiting teams feel at home in Southwest Louisiana. The CVB and Southwest Louisiana partners in tourism are proud to

host five LHSAA events in 2020. We thank everyone who has worked to make Southwest Louisiana the Youth Sports Capital of the state.

"These events are such a memorable experience for these student-athletes and they bring a positive economic impact and tremendous exposure to Calcasieu Parish," said Kyle Edmiston, President/CEO at Visit Lake Charles. "We're so thrilled to host the students and their families, and we could not hold events like this without the valuable partnerships with the hotels and our hospitality community."

For more information on these sporting events, go to [VisitLakeCharles.org](https://www.visitlakecharles.org).

LHSAA ANNUAL CONVENTION

This past January, Eric Zartler, sales director, attended the Louisiana High School Athletic Association (LHSAA) annual convention in Baton Rouge. Throughout the convention, Zartler was able to finalize various aspects of the upcoming spring tournaments that will be held in Southwest Louisiana. This past summer, the board of the LHSAA awarded the LHSAA Boys and Girls Marsh Madness State Championships to the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana area for two years. Other sporting events to be

held in Southwest Louisiana include the LHSAA State Championship Swim Meet, Allstate Sugar Bowl LHSAAA Baseball State Tournament, and the Allstate Sugar Bowl LHSAA Softball State Tournament. Southwest Louisiana is known as the Youth Sports Capital of Louisiana, and as such, the area has benefited greatly from youth sports being an economic driver from softball, baseball and basketball to swimming and a myriad of other tournaments. We are fortunate to continue the successful



partnerships with the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, SPAR, Ward 3 Recreation and the municipalities to enhance the athletic events and opportunities in Southwest Louisiana.

GATOR BITES |



IMM NEW YORK

Anne Klenke, tourism director, recently attended International Media Marketplace (IMM) in New York to expand media efforts and increase awareness of Lake Charles as a destination in the international marketplace. While attending, Klenke had the opportunity to meet with travel journalists and connect with brands from across the international travel and tourism



sector. IMM is travel journalists' annual opportunity to plan a year's worth of stories, organize press trips, foster new relationships and re-connect with established contacts.

AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION



In January, Kaitlyn Gallegos represented Visit Lake Charles at the annual American Bus Association's (ABA) Marketplace in Omaha, Nebraska. ABA's Marketplace

includes more than 137,000 pre-scheduled appointments and over 800 pre-qualified tour operators, suppliers and exhibitors. At the marketplace, the Louisiana Office of Tourism (LOT) sponsored the Resource Central Service Center and the floor lounge where attendees experienced Louisiana food and hospitality with fresh Louisiana seafood during the networking floor reception. Gallegos, along with other Louisiana delegates, worked together with LOT during the evening's networking reception serving up Louisiana Fried Catfish and took home 3rd place for Best in Show.

PCMA CONVENING LEADERS



Earlier this year, Taylor Stanley, sr. sales manager, attended the Professional Convention Management Association's (PCMA) signature Convening Leaders Conference for event professionals. This event is among the most important, influential, and inspiring conferences for the business events industry. The four-day event attracts thousands of business events executives and professionals from around the world who seek innovation, education, and connections.

VISIT LAKE CHARLES

LOUISIANA'S PLAYGROUND

1205 N. Lakeshore Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601
1-800-456-SWLA | VisitLakeCharles.org

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
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SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA SPOTLIGHT |



PGA TOUR'S KORN FERRY LAKE CHARLES CHAMPIONSHIP

This exciting high-end community event is expected to draw a crowd of 25,000 - 30,000.

The Korn Ferry Tour (formerly Web.com Tour) will debut its new Lake Charles Championship on March 23-29. The tournament will be played at The Country Club at Golden Nugget, with 156 players competing for a \$600,000 purse. This marks the first of a five-year commitment to host the tour in Lake Charles. This exciting high-end community event is expected to draw a crowd of 25,000 - 30,000, which will greatly contribute to the economic vitality and quality of life in the greater Lake Charles area. Additionally, the tournament will be a fundraising entity for local non-profit organizations supporting the advancement and health of the community.

With 50 available PGA TOUR cards for the following season, the Korn Ferry Tour is the path to the PGA TOUR. Twenty-five TOUR cards are reserved for the leading points earners at the end of the 24-event regular season. Another 25 are up for grabs at the three-event Korn Ferry Tour Finals that follow the regular season in August and September.

The Country Club at Golden Nugget is an 18-hole golf course designed by the award-winning Todd Eckenrode and Origins Golf Design. Located right on the bayou, the course has miniverde greens and celebration tees, fairways and roughs. The contrast of the bayou,

bunkers and greens make this a must-play for all. Practice rounds will be held on March 23-24, and the Pro-Am Official Tournament is on Wednesday, March 25. The Opening Round is on March 26, followed by the second, third and final round, March 27, 28 and 29, respectively. Live entertainment will also be featured on Friday and Saturday evening.

General admission ground tickets are free, compliments of Navarre Cadillac, and can be picked up at any of their locations. For more information, go to LakeCharlesChampionship.com.

