

FALL 2019

# GATOR GRAM

LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LAKE CHARLES SULPHUR WESTLAKE DEQUINCY VINTON IOWA



## PGA Korn Ferry Lake Charles Championship Set for 2020



The Korn Ferry Tour recently announced a partnership with the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau to bring a new tournament to the Tour's annual schedule starting in 2020. The Lake Charles Championship, held at The Country Club at Golden Nugget, will debut the week of March 23-29, 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.

The announcement was made on August 16 at a news conference at Golden Nugget, with Korn Ferry Tour President Alex Baldwin, Lake Charles Mayor Nic Hunter, Steve Nieman, tournament director, Golden Nugget Lake Charles SVP and General Manager Alan Trantina and Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau President/CEO Kyle Edmiston as the featured speakers.

"We are excited to partner with the Lake Charles/SWLA CVB to bring PGA Korn Ferry Tour golf to this region of Louisiana," said Korn Ferry Tour President Alex Baldwin. "I am confident our players will enjoy a tremendous week of competition at the Golden Nugget while providing local golf fans a glimpse into the future stars of the PGA TOUR."

"The Lake Charles/SWLA CVB is proud to join the long list of successful destinations that are part of the Korn Ferry Tour host family," said CVB President/CEO Kyle Edmiston. "We are thankful

to Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, Mayor Nic Hunter, and the Golden Nugget Lake Charles for helping to make this iconic event a reality. I am positive that the Korn Ferry Tour players and staff will enjoy the wonderful hospitality provided by our community."

The Country Club at Golden Nugget is an 18-hole, par 72 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 outer grass is planted with numerous ornamentals giving it a natural, native look. The most unique feature is the 15+ acres of waste bunkers. The contrast of the bayou, bunkers and greens make this a must play for all.

With 50 available PGA TOUR cards for the following season (since 2013), 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.

During the PGA TOUR's 2017-18 season, eight players from the Korn Ferry Tour Class of 2017 won titles, including Aaron Wise, whose victory at the 2018 AT&T Byron Nelson was the 500th by a former Korn Ferry Tour player – a list which includes 23 major championships and eight PLAYERS Championships.

Three players from the Class of 2018 have won on the PGA TOUR this season – Cameron Champ (Sanderson Farms Championship), Adam Long (The Desert Classic) and Martin Trainer (Puerto Rico Open). Other notable PGA TOUR players who got their start on the Korn Ferry Tour include major champions Justin Thomas, Jason Day, Bubba Watson and Zach Johnson.

Learn more at [LakeCharlesChampionship.com](http://LakeCharlesChampionship.com) or [PGATOUR.com](http://PGATOUR.com).



[www.VisitLakeCharles.org](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org) #VisitLakeCharles

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VISIT  
*LakeCharles*  
SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA



## A message from our CEO

There has been much excitement in the Lake Charles area over the past several months, and it is not stopping as we transition into fall!

In July, the CVB was contacted by Pro Watercross as their National Championship was looking for a new location to host their event in August. Eric Zartler and the entire team at the CVB jumped into action. On August 10th and 11th, the community was treated to the Pro Watercross National Championship at North Beach only 22 days after we were contacted. There were many local citizens, groups and government entities that assisted with hosting this event in such a short time period. It was such a joy to see the competitors racing 90 mph on the water and creating such excitement on the lakefront with their races and skills competition. If you missed it, I have great news as they will be coming back to Lake Charles in 2020 and 2021!

The rollout of the #GetDowntownLC initiative and partnership with the City of Lake Charles and the Downtown Business Association has taken off over social and digital media. The GetDowntownLC.com website is generating interest from people looking for places to eat, shop, and enjoy entertainment and events in downtown Lake Charles, and the restaurants are seeing increased interest and clicks for using the hashtag.

The CVB is pleased to promote local products and businesses to visitors who are interested in experiencing a true Lake Charles downtown adventure. Events that will highlight the downtown area this fall are Rouge et Blanc, Oct. 12; Chuck Fest, Oct. 19; and Smoke & Barrel on Nov. 16. These events showcase our culture, music, and culinary arts, and they also attract people to explore and appreciate our downtown businesses and streetscape.

A new event coming to the Lake Area this November 1-2 is the Southern Cast Iron Cook-off. At-home chefs are invited to preregister in four categories, including meat & game, seafood, sweet & savory, and vegetables & sides and prepare original dishes for on-site judging. A full lineup of musical entertainment will accompany the event's culinary festivities on Saturday. This will be another event for a chance for people to #GetDowntownLC!

For me, fall always means football is back! Whether you are a fan of the Saints, Texans, Pokes, Cajuns, Bulldogs or Tigers; or if you are like me and you support all of them unless they are playing each other. Football in the South is just different from anywhere else in the country. Tailgating is king, and who makes the best gumbo or BBQ is always up for debate. I encourage you to travel, to enjoy, and to experience the atmosphere at the stadium. I also invite those of you visiting Lake Charles to stop by the CVB tailgate at McNeese football games. We would love to tell you all about our destination and the exciting reasons to keep visiting Southwest Louisiana!

Kyle Edmiston, CDME | President/CEO



## #GetDowntownLC

The City of Lake Charles, the Downtown Business Association and the CVB have embarked on a new initiative to generate interest in events and experiences in downtown Lake Charles by launching the #GetDowntownLC hashtag to facilitate information flow and promotions of downtown Lake Charles. The promotion includes social media graphics, flyers, and videos, as well as a downtown microsite to help visitors and residents understand all there is to see and do in the downtown area. Check out [www.visitlakecharles.org/downtown](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/downtown).

## THE BUREAU STAFF

**Kyle Edmiston, CDME**  
*President/CEO*

### 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*  
Jamey Kadhim  
*Group Services Coordinator*  
Emilee Hoenes  
*Sales Coordinator - Sports*

### COMMUNICATIONS

Angie Manning, CDME  
*Communications Director*  
Colten Miller  
*Publications/Systems Manager*  
Amos Orr  
*Digital Marketing Strategy Manager*  
Will Precht  
*Senior Media/Public Relations Manager*  
Kathryn Duncan  
*Media/Public Relations Manager*

### TOURISM

Anne Taber Klenke  
*Tourism Director*  
Kaitlyn Gallegos  
*Sales Manager - Tour & Travel*

### VISITOR INFORMATION

Melissa Trahan  
*Tourist Information Manager*  
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*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Oliver G. "Rick" Richard, III, Chairman  
*Arts & Humanities of Southwest Louisiana*  
Evette Gradney, Vice Chairman  
*Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association*  
Jonathan Ringo, Secretary/Treasurer  
*Calcasieu Parish Police Jury*  
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*  
Alan Trantina  
*Southwest Louisiana Lodging Association*  
Willie Mount  
*Chamber Southwest*  
Kane Mitchell  
*West Calcasieu Association of Commerce*



# COMING UP

## Louisiana Culinary Trails

This October, Chef Dave Evans from Luna Bar & Grill and Chef Lyle Broussard from L'Auberge Casino Resort's Jack Daniel's Bar & Grill, will join some of the state's finest chefs to showcase Louisiana's destinations through the best of their culinary offerings for a crowd of editors, writers, bloggers, group tour operators and VIP consumers, as part of the Louisiana Culinary Trails Atlanta Media Mission.

Louisiana Culinary Trails partners will join the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in Atlanta, Georgia for a Louisiana-themed media preview night and restaurant night. Eleven chefs from Louisiana destinations will be showcasing local flavors to a crowd of about 100 editors and local Atlanta media/influencers, plus editors and guests of AJC. The following evening, Louisiana chefs will be in the kitchens of eleven of Atlanta's hottest restaurants for a Louisiana Restaurant Night.

CVB staff members, Kyle Edmiston and Kathryn Duncan will accompany the chefs during the Louisiana Culinary Trails Media Mission, along with staff from the Louisiana Travel Association. Throughout their stay, they will have the opportunity to promote Southwest Louisiana to editors from several Atlanta media outlets, as well as freelance writers.



Chef Dave Evans, Luna Bar & Grill



Chef Lyle Broussard,  
L'Auberge Casino Resort's Jack Daniel's Bar & Grill



## Louisiana Travel Summit to be Held in Lake Charles in 2020

This August, multiple CVB staff members attended the Louisiana Lt. Governor's Travel Summit in Baton Rouge. This 3-day educational opportunity is held each year and features a keynote address from the Lt. Governor, top educational speakers from around the country, workshops addressing the latest industry trends, as well as opportunities to network with other tourism professionals. The closing luncheon in Baton Rouge was co-sponsored by the Lake Charles CVB where the announcement was made that Golden Nugget Lake Charles will play host to this event August 18-20, 2020. Let's get ready to welcome the entire Louisiana tourism industry to SWLA in 2020!

## Branding Reveal Save the Date: Oct. 18

The Lake Charles/SWLA Convention & Visitors Bureau has embarked on a comprehensive destination marketing and branding initiative. As destination marketers, we face numerous challenges, including the fact that our destination itself is always evolving. We want to ensure that our brand still represented Southwest Louisiana in all its complexity, as it needs to be contemporary and easily understood by a global audience. The bureau staff worked collaboratively with Miles Partnership to produce the brand refresh, and it has been tested in domestic and international markets and reflects more than four months of intensive research. Join us at Golden Nugget on Friday, October 18 at 11:30 a.m. for the reveal of our new brand!



## Angie Manning Appointed to State Board



Angie Manning was recently appointed to the board of directors for Keep Louisiana Beautiful (KLB), the state's anti-litter and community improvement organization. The mission for KLB is to promote personal, corporate, and community responsibility for a clean and beautiful Louisiana. Through a variety of programs and a statewide network of affiliates, KLB provides the right tools and resources

to prevent litter, reduce waste, increase recycling, and protect the natural resources of our communities. KLB is led by a statewide, volunteer Board of Directors, as well as an Advisory Board comprised of state agencies. Additional representatives from the Lake Charles area include Eligha Guillory, Jr., of Pedestal Bank, and Dana Keel of Citgo.

## Louisiana Tourism Leadership Academy in Lake Charles



The 2019 class of the Louisiana Tourism Leadership Academy (LTLA) recently held an educational session in Lake Charles. While in the area, the class had the opportunity to tour Crying Eagle Brewery, as well as learn a variety of marketing techniques and best practices from seasoned tourism and marketing professionals. CVB staff members Colten Miller and Will Precht are members of the 2019 class and will complete the program in January. The goal of LTLA 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.



## IPW 2019

This summer, the CVB attended U.S. Travel Association's IPW in Anaheim, California, June 1-5, 2019. The event is a national showcase of America, where U.S. travel exhibitors connect with travel buyers and media from more than 70 countries. Over the course of the showcase, exhibitors meet face-to-face with leading international and domestic travel buyers and media through scheduled appointments, and take part in unique networking events. Each year, IPW generates more than \$4.7 billion in future travel to the U.S.

## Louisiana Rural Water Association

The Louisiana Rural Water Association (LRWA) held their annual Training & Technical Conference July 15-18 at the Lake Charles Civic Center. The bureau was excited to host the conference in Lake Charles for the seventh year in a row, as well as showcase the area to the 1,000+ participants. Attendees participated in water and wastewater certification review courses, technical classes and surveyors classes.

The LRWA Conference provides the water and wastewater personnel in Louisiana with various training on day-to-day operations; informative topics regarding federal/state rules and regulations, new and innovated equipment, and managerial training. LRWA works closely with Louisiana Department of Health and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.





## Destinations International Annual Conference



Anne Klenke, Shanna Landry, Kyle Edmiston, Shelley Johnson, Eric Zartler, Heather Savoie, and Angie Manning attended the 2019 Destinations International annual convention.

This past July, several staff members attended Destinations International's annual convention in St. Louis, MO. As the premier event for destination professionals, this convention provides a unique opportunity for destination organizations to connect with and learn from peers and thought leaders from inside and outside the industry.

The CVB was fortunate to be recognized by Destinations International for a number of achievements, one being the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) seal. The accreditation program requires a destination organization to successfully comply with a multitude of mandatory and voluntary standards that span a variety of performance areas. The standards cover nearly all aspects related to the management and marketing of destination organizations including governance, finance, human resources, sales, communications, destination development and research.



Shelley Johnson, former Executive Director of the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau is inducted into the Hall of Fame. Also pictured (left to right): Don Welsh, Destinations International President and CEO; Paul Arrigo, President & CEO of Visit Baton Rouge and Awards Committee Co-Chair; and Steve Moore, President & CEO of Visit Phoenix and Awards Committee Co-Chair.

Additionally, Shanna Landry, director of administration, and Eric Zartler, sales director were among the 31 industry professionals that earned the Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) designation, the only integrated executive program specifically designed for the Destination Marketing industry. The CDME program is recognized as the highest educational achievement for destination management professionals. By earning this designation, these graduates join an elite group of professionals who seek to elevate the industry and its standards. CVB staff members Anne Klenke and Heather Savoie are currently pursuing this certification.

Shelley Johnson, former executive director for the bureau, was also inducted into the Hall of Fame, for her many achievements in the tourism industry. The Hall of Fame, started in 2014 during Destinations International's 100th Anniversary, was created to recognize individuals who have changed the future of destination marketing for the better, made significant contributions to the advancement of the industry and shaped travel marketing. It is the highest honor that Destinations International can bestow.



CVB staff receives the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP) certificate from Don Welsh, Destinations International President and CEO (left) and David Holder, DMAP Chair (right).



Congratulations to Eric Zartler, sales director, and Shanna Landry, director of administration, for earning their CDME credential, the tourism industry's highest individual achievement.



## Outdoor Writers Experience Sportsman's Paradise



In May, the CVB hosted four outdoor travel writers, including one from Canada, on a media tour that highlighted opportunities to be had for outdoor enthusiasts in Southwest Louisiana. The writers had a successful visit after catching speckled trout and redfish in Calcasieu Lake, and bass while freshwater fishing in Sweet Lake. They also participated in the state's Catch and Cook program with Chef Lyle Broussard who prepared their trout and redfish in unique and traditional dishes.

## Travel Media Showcase



The communications department attends various conferences throughout the year that offer opportunities to meet one-on-one with journalists and network with travel media to pitch story ideas. Will Precht, Senior Media/Public Relations Manager, attended Travel Media Showcase August 20-23 in DeKalb, GA. During the tradeshow, Precht was able to foster relationships with travel media as they exchanged story ideas and participated in press trips. Nearly 200 journalists were in attendance, including editors, staff and freelance travel writers, magazine and newspaper travel writers, broadcast travel journalists, as well as Internet travel journalists and bloggers.

## PRSA, Philadelphia - Recap



The public relations team recently attended the Public Relations Society of America's Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Conference in Philadelphia, PA. The conference was attended by hundreds of public relations industry professionals who come together annually to take part in hands-on emerging skills sessions, network with peers and travel media, as well as receive the latest updates on tourism industry trends.

## The ROAMies Podcast: Dip Nets, Boudin, and Alligators, Oh My



Connect with local Rory Partin and hear his favorite places to see and things to do in Southwest Louisiana. The ROAMies, husband and wife duo Rory and Alexa (James) Partin, are not only accomplished musicians, but also avid traveling companions that have experienced many destinations around the globe. Rory grew up right here in Southwest Louisiana, while his wife, Alexa, has also found a fondness for the Lake Area. They've decided to share what they love about the region in this 13-minute audio clip filled with inspiring stories and fun memories. Listen at [www.visitlakecharles.org/roamies](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/roamies).



# AROUND TOWN

## Top 20 Restaurants Winners



Luna Bar & Grill



Steamboat Bill's



Pats of Henderson

The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) held the seventh annual Top 20 “Local Favorites” Restaurant Competition where individuals could nominate and vote online for their favorite places to eat in Southwest Louisiana. Culinary tourism is on the rise, and people generally want to know where the locals like to eat. This competition highlights the best of the best in Southwest Louisiana according to popular vote.

There were 250 restaurant nominations made by the public with nearly 8,500 votes cast, the highest number of votes ever. The restaurant that received the most votes was Luna Bar & Grill. Second place went to Steamboat Bill's followed by Pat's of Henderson for third place.

Other restaurants that made it to the Top 20, in alphabetical order are 121 Artisan Bistro, Brown Bag Café, Buffi's Peaux Boys, Casa Mañana, Darrell's, Harlequin Steaks & Seafood, Mazen's Mediterranean Foods, Nina P's, Restaurant Calla, Saltgrass Steakhouse at Golden Nugget, Seafood Palace, Southern Spice Restaurant & Grill, Texas Roadhouse, The Villa, Toga Grill, Tony's Pizza and Walk-On's.

The contest was promoted through social media, on the CVB's website, and public relations efforts. For more information, log onto [www.visitlakecharles.org/Top20](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/Top20).



## Lake Charles wins Small Market of the Year honors for record ninth year in a row

Lake Charles and the Southwest Louisiana region has done it again! Southern Business & Development magazine ranked Lake Charles as Small Market of the Year for the ninth consecutive year, outdistancing runners-up in Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama. No market in the South has earned its peer's highest ranking more than nine consecutive years. The Lake Charles region has been a nationwide leader in the petrochemical and LNG industries for years, however, this latest run is unprecedented. Tens of billions of dollars have been invested in Southwest Louisiana in those nine years and the Lake Charles MSA has seen greater job growth than any market in America. The fracking frenzy has certainly benefited our economy on a large scale. The magazine also ranked Louisiana No. 2 for securing the best economic development performance in the South on a per capita basis.

## SWLA Artist Profile Project

The CVB and the Arts Council of Southwest Louisiana are working together to create artist profiles on [VisitLakeCharles.org](http://VisitLakeCharles.org) to showcase local talent including information on where to see or experience artwork, background information on artists, as well as samples of their work. The broader goal is to use this information to enhance the appeal of Southwest Louisiana from a creative standpoint and highlight the thriving arts community for visitors. Learn more at [www.visitlakecharles.org/artist](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/artist).







# LAKE CHARLES

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LAKE CHARLES | SULPHUR | WESTLAKE  
DEQUINCY | VINTON | IOWA

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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## SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA SPOTLIGHT



### Southern Cast Iron Cook-Off

A new and exciting culinary event is coming to Lake Charles! The inaugural Southern Cast Iron Cook-Off will be held November 1-2 at the Lake Charles Civic Center. A celebration of cast iron culinary culture, Southern Cast Iron Cook-Off will bring together cast iron enthusiasts for a fun-filled, family-friendly event that includes an expo, cooking demonstrations, live musical entertainment, food and beverage booths, and a cook-off competition among at-home chefs.

The two-day event kicks off at 1 p.m. Friday, Nov. 1 with an indoor expo featuring the latest cast iron essentials and wares, cooking demonstrations, and artisan cast iron makers. On Saturday, the Southern Cast Iron Cook-Off competition and expo will start at 11 a.m. The competition will include teams of at-home chefs from around the country preparing original dishes on-site. A panel of judges will select the top dish in various categories, and winners will be recognized during an awards ceremony at 6 p.m. In addition, guests can sample cuisine or enjoy beverages from any food and drink booth throughout the event.

A full lineup of musical entertainment will accompany the event's culinary festivities on Saturday. Feufollet will take the stage at 11:00 a.m., followed by Geno Delafosse and French Rockin' Boogie at 12:45 p.m., The Iceman Special at 2:30 p.m., Dustin Sonnier at 4:30 p.m. and country music artist Craig Morgan will headline the event at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 and children 12 & under receive free admission. The Southern Cast Iron Cook-Off benefits the United Way of Southwest Louisiana. For a complete schedule of events and to buy tickets, go to [www.visitlakecharles.org/castiron](http://www.visitlakecharles.org/castiron). See you there!



Craig Morgan will perform on Nov. 2 at 6:30 p.m.