

TOURISM WORKS for SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

► VISITLAKECHARLES.ORG



LAKE CHARLES/SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA CVB Achieves Destination Marketing Accreditation



► Kyle Edmiston, Shanna Landry, Angie Manning and Eric Zartler attended the Destinations International conference and received the accreditation certificate during the recognition ceremony.

The Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) recently earned the highest level of destination marketing accreditation, meeting rigorous standards set forth by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP), managed by Destinations International.

The Lake Charles CVB is one of only 218 organizations to be accredited worldwide and one of 7 CVBs in Louisiana to earn the new and prestigious accreditation, along with the Louisiana State Office of Tourism. The CVB was first accredited in

2009, maintained accreditation through meeting new standards along the way, and recently, the CVB reapplied in 2018 under new guidelines for a complete reaccreditation.

"This accreditation process took the majority of a year to complete, and we are very pleased to be recognized in the destination marketing community for providing outstanding services in accordance with international standards and benchmarks in this field," said Shelley Johnson, executive director of the CVB.

DMAP is an international accreditation program developed by the Washington, DC, based Destinations International. In earning the DMAP accreditation, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) communicate to their community, buyers and potential visitors that their DMO has attained a significant

measure of excellence.

DMAP accreditation standards cover a wide variety of topics including governance, finance, management, human resources, technology, visitor services, group services, sales, communications, brand management, destination development, research/market intelligence, innovation and stakeholder relationships.

DMAP is an independent, international accreditation body and a leader in defining quality and performance in destination marketing.

For additional information on DMAP visit www.destinationsinternational.org.



► Destinations honored with accreditation status at Destinations International.

THANK YOU For Your Years of Service

The staff at the CVB extends heartfelt gratitude to Samuel V. Wilkinson, 2018 chairman of the board, representing the Chamber Southwest and Brian Levens, board member, representing the West Calcasieu Association of Commerce. Wilkinson and Levens both served on the board of directors for the CVB for six years, and we appreciate their dedication and commitment to the travel and tourism industry. Wilkinson, executive vice president of First Federal Bank of Louisiana, presently serves on the board

for the Krewe of Contraband, is a member of The Montaigne Society and a past president of the Louisiana Young Bankers Association. Levens, a financial advisor for Edward Jones, served as the president of the West Cal Chamber in 2011 and board member until 2017. He served on the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball executive committee in 2012 and 2014 and helped develop and establish the "Vision Sulphur" framework for Sulphur's strategic planning in 2010.



► Samuel V. Wilkinson
Representing the Chamber Southwest



► Brian Levens
Representing the West Calcasieu Association of Commerce

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

From the Desk of
Shelley Johnson, CDME,
LCTP, Executive Director

The tourism industry is big business, and the expectations for travel spending are up for 2019, as reported by Destination Analysts in the *State of the American Traveler* fall edition. In fact, 36.9% of travelers are planning not only to travel but increase their spending next year. Coming down to dollars and cents, that's \$3,232 for leisure travelers per trip, which is up 2.6%. So, what's does that mean? It means that not only are people looking for inspiration to travel, but they are also investing in communities like Southwest Louisiana.

The 2017 traveler expenditures for Calcasieu Parish totaled \$732.09

million dollars, sustaining many businesses and families who live here. The visitors who stay overnight in Southwest Louisiana experience the breadth of what our culture, our people, celebrations, attractions, wildlife, gaming resorts and culinary traditions have to offer. It's a powerful industry that relies on everyone in the community working together, sharing information, photos and videos as well as ideas for a brighter tomorrow. It's rewarding to lead visitors to Southwest Louisiana and see them share their love for our area with their friends and family.

We have a creative destination with locally-owned businesses embracing our past while pushing the next phase of our future into reality. Artists, musicians and event organizers are thriving and introducing new events and festivals to Southwest Louisiana which in turn, entices visitation or

encourages visitors to stay longer to soak in all that the area has to offer.

The staff at the CVB is looking forward to 2019, and the marketing plan for next year is packed with fresh ideas to drive tourism and move the needle for a prosperous New Year. While friends and family are visiting with you this holiday season, make sure you build in time to enjoy our incredible destination by exploring itinerary ideas, things to do, culinary delights, festivals and events on our website VisitLakeCharles.org.

Best Wishes this Holiday Season,



Shelley Johnson, CDME, LCTP
Executive Director



ACCOLADES IN 2018 – A GREAT YEAR!



Photo by Brooklin Alexander

- ★ Southwest Louisiana Arts Patron of the Year – Mayor's Arts Award
- ★ Sports Events Readers' Choice Award
- ★ Destiny Award, Top 3 Finalist in the Nation, "Meet the Locals Video Series"
- ★ ConventionSouth, Readers' Choice Award for the Third Consecutive Year
- ★ Certified Louisiana Retirement Area
- ★ Achieved Certification from the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program
- ★ Top 10 Under the Radar Destinations by TheTravel.com
- ★ AARP-Expedia named Lake Charles as 9 places for Snowbirds to Escape this Winter

► 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.



GATOR BITES

3 Contests Going on Now, Presented by the CVB!

Gingerbread House Contest



announced on Wednesday, Dec. 26. Regular hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Saturday – Sunday, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. Log onto Visitlakecharles.org/Gingerbread for details.

Mini Christmas Trees



the Brimstone Museum Complex, 900 S. Huntington St. The contest encouraged participants to decorate trees with cultural ties to Louisiana. Pictured above is first place winner, Jennifer Newton, along with Gumbeaux Gator. Regular hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. – noon and 1-5 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Visit Brimstonemuseum.org for more information.

Mardi Gras Shoebox Floats



you can participate by checking out Visitlakecharles.org/Shoebox. The floats will be on display Feb. 2 – March 6, and the registration deadline is January 11, 2019.

Creole Nature Trail Adventure Point, the CVB's satellite office, is partnering with the Brimstone Museum Complex and the City of Sulphur to present the 2nd Annual Mini Christmas Tree Decorating Contest on display at

Mardi Gras magic is right around the corner. The CVB hosts its annual Mardi Gras Shoebox Float contest each year prior to the season to get people geared up for the festive time of year. Register today and learn more about how