



# The Plaquemines GAZETTE

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BELLE CHASSE, LA

50 CENTS

## Swim Hero Smashes COVID-19 Barriers

YMCA Aquatics Executive Director for the YMCA of Greater New Orleans Rachael Jonas received the 2021 "Make a Splash" National Swim Hero Award.

Phillips 66, in conjunction with the USA Swimming Foundation recognized three heroes from around the US. Jonas brought the honor to New Orleans. She was recognized along with Adam Bueling of Chicago and Shawn Slevin of New York. Jonas was honored for her work building the YMCA of Greater New Orleans H2Geaux Safety Around Water program - offering water safety education to

all members of the community despite economic hardship, special education needs, inaccessibility to pools, or other challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

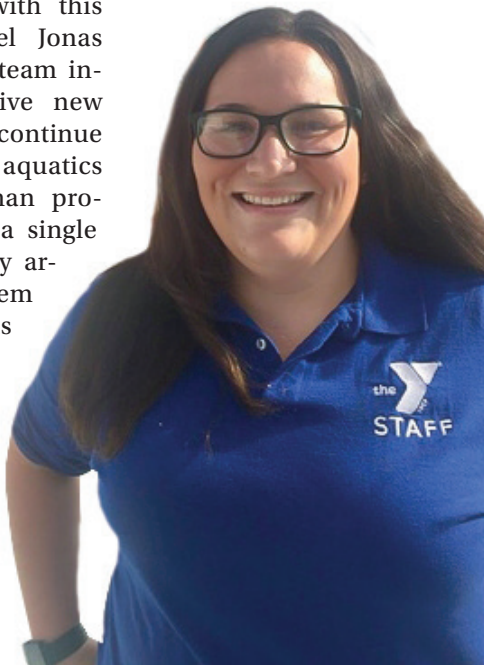
We live in a region surrounded by water. According to the Louisiana Department of Health's Report 2015-2017, Louisiana had the highest rate of drowning in the US for children ages 1 to 14. Drowning was the second leading cause of injury-related death for children in Louisiana. And near drownings can result in cerebral injuries, pulmonary damage, and life-threatening cardiac ar-

rest. Minority and low-income children are often the most at risk.

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to halt water safety and swim lesson programs across the country. Confronted with this challenge, Rachael Jonas and her aquatics team introduced a creative new approach to continue delivering vital aquatics classes. Rather than providing lessons at a single pool location, they arranged to host them at eleven pools across the region. Through YMCA partnerships

with - Plaquemines Parish Government, Phillips 66, Jefferson Parish Government, The Jefferson Community Foundation, Waste

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Rachael Jonas, Aquatics Executive Director for the YMCA of Greater New Orleans, received the 2021 "Make a Splash" National Swim Hero Award. As a Swim Hero Award recipient, Jonas received an award of \$5,000 to continue providing aquatics services to the Greater New Orleans community through the YMCA.

## SAVE THE DATE: Port Sulphur Civic Drive Fishing Pier Ribbon-Cutting



Join Plaquemines Parish Government for the opening and ribbon cutting of the Port Sulphur Civic Drive Public Fishing Pier on Friday, January 29, at 11 a.m.

MAILING INFO HERE

## Gardner wins 2020 Hike-a-Thon

Corey Gardner was the winner and top miler of Woodlands Conservancy's 2020 Hike-a-Thon finishing the event with a record 502.48 miles! Corey received a set of Mignon Faget Palmetto glassware. He and the remaining top 10 received a one-year membership, a Woodlands Conservancy hat and a Hydroflask with the Save Our Sponge logo. In addition to Corey, the top ten finishers included: Greg Abdelnoor 243.18, Jeremy Brewer 180.27, Barbara James 171.63, Heather West 151.48, Grace Shipps 130.32, Liz Rayfield 125.06, David Pate 99.153, Emily Hernandez 86.65 and Orin Wakefield 85.28.

The event sponsored by Ballay, Braud

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Local resident, Corey Gardner, MSgt, LAANG poses with his winnings from Woodlands Conservancy's 2020 Hike-a-Thon.



## CPRA Changes to Oyster Lease Acquisition Program

By Justin Walton  
reporter@thebernardvoice.com

At the January 20 Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority board meeting—which met virtually due to the ever-worsening spread of the Covid-19 pandemic—board members voted to adopt 11 proposed changes to CPRA's Oyster Lease Acquisition and Compensation Program.

According to a press release sent out by CPRA, OLACP was established in 2006 as a means to bring "order to the process when coastal protection and restoration efforts directly impact these [state owned] oyster leases." Executive Director of CPRA Bren Haase stated that OLACP has been an effective program overall—as CPRA has acquired "dozens of leases and only 4 [of those acquisitions] have been appealed."

However, the oyster industry and other interested stakeholders brought forth several issues with the program in July 2020.

In response to these complaints, CPRA conducted a several month long review process of OLACP beginning in September 2020. This review process included an in-depth study of OLACP and input from the affected industries. CPRA "noted inefficiencies and provisions of the program that could be improved" during this review process.

The 11 changes voted on by the CPRA board were the recommended improvements that came as a result of this study. Those changes are the following:

1. Authorizing lease holders to retain their leases upon waiving OLACP compensation. While they would receive no monetary compensation, lease holders could retain their leases in case they are still usable after the coastal project is completed.

2. Authorizing lease holders to accept a fixed payment of \$100 per acre with a minimum payment of \$1,000, upon waiving the value assessment process for their oyster lease and its costs. This measure would likely be useful for nonproductive leases, reducing total program cost.

3. Authorizing CPRA and lease holders to settle acquisition claims, if there is sufficient basis for CPRA to determine lease value, upon agreeing to a reduced assessment process and its costs. This measure would likely be used for productive or marginally productive leases when the lease holder and CPRA agree on lease value, reducing total program cost.

4. Authorizing CPRA to conduct agency valuations or "informal value estimates" in lieu of appraisals for small, easily valued acquisitions. This measure would reduce total program cost, and would follow similar regulations under federal law.

5. Providing zero value for leases incapable of supporting oyster cultivation. State oyster leases are granted for the purpose of oyster cultivation, and if that is not possible, there is no public benefit to paying for such unproductive leases. This would only be implemented if the leaseholder forced CPRA to go through with the costly lease assessment process rather than settle for the fixed rate of \$100 per acre.

6. Reducing the notification period for the oyster component of compensation from one year to six months, putting OLACP in line with existing Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries oyster-leasing regulations.

7. Expressly providing that the oyster component, which pays for "marketable oysters," is limited to the oysters the lease holder could actually harvest. The science is clear that lease holders do not actually harvest all oysters on the water bottoms. "Marketable" means "capable of being marketed." Oysters that cannot be harvested are not marketable. CPRA will pay for a default 70% of oysters on a lease—the original percentage of what are considered "Marketable Oysters" as laid out by LDWF—unless the lease holder can prove that a higher percentage of their oysters are considered "marketable."

8. Expanding a practice CPRA has already begun im-

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## GARDNER

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and Colon, PLC and Power System Specialists was organized by Woodlands Conservancy to raise funds and awareness for the Woodlands Trail system in Belle Chasse. The virtual event was a chance to get outside in nature alone or with your pandemic pod of like-minded friends to give back to your community by walking, hiking and/or running a marathon, 26.2 miles at your own pace.

Additional congratulations to individuals who completed the Hike-a-Thon goal of 26.2 miles! Each will receive a one-year membership and a Woodlands Conservancy hat. The Hike-a-Thon finishers included: Benjamin Louis, Ashley Booth, Sally Davis, Heather Hernandez, Katie Brasted, LeighAnn Rayfield and Tanvi Shah.

Participants expressed a desire to do the event again in the spring and had lots of suggestions to get more community members and businesses involved in the virtual event that allowed everyone to get outside and hike for their health.

# Save the Date!

### JANUARY 29

Join Plaquemines Parish Government for the opening and ribbon cutting of the Port Sulphur Civic Drive Public Fishing Pier on Friday, January 29, at 11 a.m.

## WEEKLY

### 7 DAYS A WEEK

Be prepared! Flu Season is coming. Get the Flu Shot at the Plaquemines Medical Center, 27136 Highway 23, Port Sulphur, Third Floor.

The clinic is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Get vaccinated before it's too late. The cost is \$25. For more information, call 504.564.3344.

### TUESDAYS

The Rotary Club of Belle Chasse meets every Tuesday at 12 p.m. at Adams Catfish House in Belle Chasse. Anyone interested in learning more about Rotary or becoming a member, email bellechasserotary@gmail.com.

### THURSDAYS

American Legion Post 329 meets on the third Thurs. of each month at 6:30 p.m. at 104 Hunt Street, Belle Chasse. All Veterans are welcome to join. A meal is served at each meeting. The meeting space is also available to rent for special occasions. Due to COVID-19, the building has not had much use in the recent months. The proceeds from renting out the American Legion Post 329 building really help local veterans by providing funds to vets in need. It also helps with do-

nations to food banks, holiday baskets for children who are disadvantaged and abused, and much more. Your support would be greatly appreciated. For more info, call Carlotta at 504.393.1667.

### SUBMISSIONS

If there's an event or meeting you'd like to include in "Save the Date," email copy@plaqueminesgazette.com. Entries limited to 100 words. Some restrictions apply. For more info, call 504.392.1619.

## JONAS

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Connections, New Orleans Recreation Development Commission, Nike Community Impact Fund, The Fore! Kids Foundation, the Louise H. Moffett Family

Foundation, YMCA of the USA, USA Swimming Foundation, and lead challenge grants from local philanthropists George & Nell Wilson - Jonas led her aquatics team in serving 1,700 children in a COVID restricted 2020 year and 3,300 chil-

dren in 2019.

In her 17-year aquatics career, Jonas has mentored over 100 aquatics professionals and has provided over 20,000 children and adults with vital life lessons in safety around water, swim lessons, lifeguarding, swim instructor training, CPR, and First Aid. In 2017 she introduced the YMCA H2Geaux Safety Around Water program that allows for local students to take swimming instruction as part of their physical education requirement.

"Water safety means to me that every child, no matter their background or history with water, deserves to learn how to swim," Jonas said. "Just like every kid that learns how to ride a bike or write their ABCs, they deserve to learn how to swim." The YMCA offers aquatics lessons for the entire family including parents of swim students.

As a Swim Hero Award recipient, Jonas received



Jonas guides students through swim lessons.

an award of \$5,000 to continue providing aquatics services to the Greater New Orleans community through the YMCA.

Jonas' current certifications include: YMCA Lifeguard Instructor Trainer, YMCA Aquatic Leader, YMCA Team Leader, and Swim Angelfish "Swim Whisper" for children with differing

Instructor, American Safety and Health Institute Basic Life Support & First Aid Trainer, Red Cross Lifeguard Instructor, Red Cross CPR and First Aid Instructor Trainer, YMCA Aquatic Leader, YMCA Team Leader, and Swim Angelfish "Swim Whisper" for children with differing

abilities. Additionally, this month, Rachael was selected as a YMCA of USA national service delivery partner specializing in diverse ability swim lessons. This designation will allow her to formally consult with YMCAs across the country regarding aquatics.

## JEANFREAU'S BARBER SHOP

Specializing in haircuts for men, women and children



Anne



Jim



Jan



Tammy



504-393-1687

8082 Highway 23, Belle Chasse

Tues - Fri: 9 - 5  
Saturday: 9 - 2

# Our Lady of Perpetual Help School

## New Student Registration

Begins Feb. 8



PK1-7th



**Private  
Tours  
Available**

**THE Catholic School of  
Plaquemines Parish**

School Office: 504-394-0757

Website: school.olphbc.org

Facebook.com/olphbc

Email: admissions@olphbc.org

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, or athletic and other school administered programs.