

Headline: Positive changes take place in region
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The new normal is not so new anymore.

Our post-Katrina part of the world has changed and is different. I know this because in the last two weeks I have witnessed positive news from across our region as well as positive results from the work of our committee members' efforts to support small business. What a refreshing change after nearly five years of recovery and rebuilding.

It began with my attendance at the GNO Inc. annual meeting where our 2006 past chairman of the board was recognized as immediate outgoing chairman of GNO Inc's. board. In 2008, 300 people attended this same event in 2008; in 2009, it was 600. That number shot up to 1,000 this year. An impressive video proved the economic change in new jobs created, improved work force development and results in higher education, rebuilding, collaboration among the 10-parish region and between business and elected government leadership. Everyone enjoys being part of a successful momentum.

I heard similar positive changes were celebrated at the annual meeting of BRAC-the Baton Rouge Area Chamber. Since Katrina and Rita, Baton Rouge has experienced tremendous population and economic growth and change. Our two cities of Baton Rouge and New Orleans as well as the parishes that surround both are more closely connected than ever. Thus it makes sense that they connect, that business and government leaders work together to make them, and especially the growing parishes along the Interstate 12 corridor, a "Super Region."

We are providing our members and St. Tammany business leaders to hear about this new partnership straight from top leaders in the triangle of New Orleans, Baton Rouge and the north shore. Michael Hecht, the CEO of GNO Inc., Adam Knapp, CEO of B.R.A.C., and Marty Mayer, a private business leader invested and engaged throughout the Southeast region as CEO of Stirling Properties, will have a dialogue about the potential through cooperation and collaboration. Join us on Wednesday at Tchefunta Country Club for our monthly luncheon featuring these three gentlemen and listen to their dialogue about the progress of this new effort to stimulate our economy through current business expansion, entrepreneurship and other economic development means.

Maybe it's just that normal is yet again a new normal. I've never been able to define what normal means, but if this is it, I like it.

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